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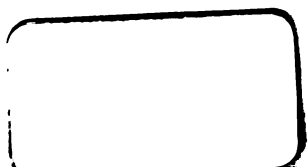
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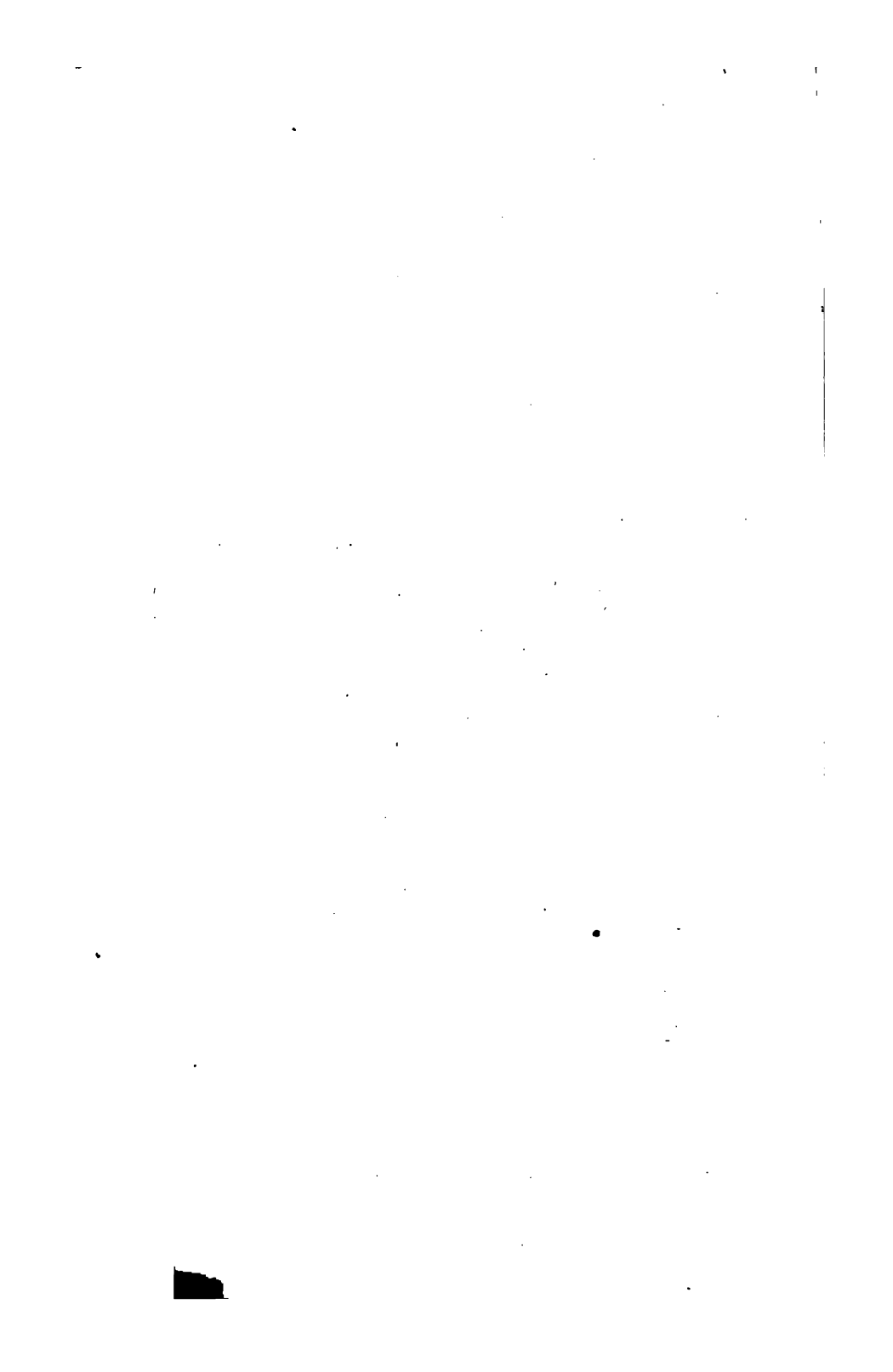
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THE CAMPBELLS.

A NOVEL.

"I would not champ the hard cold bit
——— of what the world thinks fit,—
But take God's freedom—using it."

E. B. BROWNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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THE CAMPBELLS.

CHAPTER I.

LORD WINDWORTH was at breakfast. The day was already far advanced, but the House had not risen till a very late hour on the preceding night, and his Lordship may therefore be pardoned for having followed its example on the succeeding morning. He was perusing with great complacency the report in the "Times" of his own speech, and had nearly allowed his coffee to get cold while reveling in the withering satire with which he had annihilated Lord Braywell, and in the "hear, hear" from the Ministerial benches with which the said annihilation had been received. Real eloquence is always touching.

But one's own speech in the "Times" the next morning, especially if it has been a success, that is the eloquence to bring the tears into a man's eyes.

"It is a fine speech!" muttered Lord Windworth to himself. "It is impossible to deny that it was *the* speech of the night, out and out; especially the conclusion, so honest, simple, and dignified."

"Never, my Lords, have I addressed your Lordships' House with a deeper feeling of the grave responsibilities which attach to my position than at the present moment. The noble Lord opposite has brought forward charges of the most serious character against the Government respecting the manner in which the patronage connected more particularly with my own department has been conferred. I defy the noble Lord to substantiate them (hear, hear). I repeat, I defy the noble Lord to substantiate them (hear, hear, hear). When I first entered upon the arduous duties of that high office to which it has graciously pleased Her Majesty to

call me, I laid down for myself a very simple principle for the distribution of my patronage, and I can conscientiously say that I have most religiously adhered to it. That principle was, to fill up vacant appointments with those persons who I believed would discharge the duties of them with the greatest honour to themselves and advantage to the public service (hear). In selecting such persons, my Lords, I have adopted for my guidance three infallible rules. In the first place, never to appoint any person except from among the circle of my own immediate friends and relations; not out of any feeling of partiality towards them, but because I am of course far better able to judge of their abilities than of those of comparative strangers; secondly, never to appoint any persons but staunch Whigs, as the administrative ability of that party is notorious (loud cheers from the Ministerial benches); and, thirdly, always to prefer such persons as are connected by birth or marriage with the members of your Lordships' House to others less fortunately circumstanced, as it is no

less notorious that administrative, like legislative talent, is always hereditary (deafening cheers from all sides of the house). These, my Lords, I humbly conceive to be the noble principles upon which the government of this great country has always been conducted by that party to which I have the honour to belong; and in spite of the taunts of the noble Lord opposite, I defy him to mention a single instance in which I have ever swerved from them. (Deafening cheers from the Ministerial benches, which lasted several minutes, in the midst of which his Lordship resumed his seat)."

"That was *the* speech I rather— Well, Blackson," said Lord Windworth, breaking off short in his soliloquy, as he saw the butler at the door.

"Please, my lord, Mr. Egerton is here, and wishes to know if it would be convenient to your lordship to see him."

"Mr. Egerton! Oh, yes, certainly. Shew him in at once, and bring another cup and some more coffee. Stop though; no, shew him into

the next room, and tell him I am particularly engaged just now, but will see him in a few minutes."

"Mr. Egerton," said Lord Windworth, examining the card which Blackson had just laid upon the table. "It is just as well to remember a little more about him first," he continued, looking at a memorandum book. "Let me see. Here it is—Egerton. Lord Botherton introduced him to me. Botherton is a rising man; I should like to do him a turn. Young Egerton seemed rather clever. Father a regular tory, but the son a radical or something like it. But then very young still, so a little official training may put all that to rights. By the way, I was nearly forgetting that. Brother married an Italian actress; did him out of the baronetcy and estates. Younger son—no property. Botherton said the other day he was going to marry old Dromedary's daughter. Odd fellow—Dromedary! Would insist on our dropping the *b* and pronouncing his name *camel*, so we nicknamed him old Dromedary at Eton. Old Camp-

bell has plenty of money, so Egerton might still go into the House. Besides the nephew is only a baby and may die. But it is not a case for more than general promises at present."

Lord Windworth rang the bell. Blackson answered it.

"Tell Mr. Egerton that I am disengaged now and shall be happy to see him."

Blackson retired, and a minute afterwards announced Mr. Egerton.

"Good morning, my lord."

"Ah, Mr. Egerton, I am very happy to see you. It is true," continued Lord Windworth, looking at his watch, "I am expecting three deputations almost directly, and have not much time, but I can spare you a few minutes. It is a sad life we lead in office, Mr. Egerton, a sad life! Not a moment to call our own. You have sustained a severe affliction since I had the pleasure of seeing you last. Allow me to assure you of my sincere sympathy. Poor Sir William! Have you had any news from Lady Egerton lately?"

"I heard of her about ten days ago, my lord."

"And the young baronet, how is he getting on, eh? Rather unexpected, that marriage of your brother's, was it not? Well, well, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*."

"I have had very good news of my young nephew, my lord. I hear he is a fine, healthy boy."

Lord Windworth looked at Egerton with a very peculiar smile. It was intended to be expressive of sympathy, generally, but there was something comical about it.

"He must be either very green," thought his lordship, "or else just the man for Vienna. Not a trace of annoyance about his face!"

"Hem, coming to England?"

"Very shortly, I believe. But as your Lordship's time is so valuable, perhaps I had better mention at once the object of my call. When Lord Botherton introduced me to your Lordship, you were so kind as to say you would give me a place in the Home Office, and I should be very

glad if your Lordship could make the appointment as soon as possible, as—"

"Ah, yes, I believe I did say something of the kind, Mr. Egerton, and I can only repeat that if it is in my power to advance your prospects in life in any way, it will afford me the sincerest pleasure—the sincerest pleasure. But you see, just at this present moment, I am rather peculiarly situated, with regard to the question of patronage, and I am afraid I must ask you to have a little patience. Perhaps, in a few months it may be otherwise, and then you know you may rely upon my doing my utmost to meet your views. May I ask whether you are particularly anxious for an appointment immediately?"

"Yes, my lord, I am," replied Egerton, "there are circumstances which render it of great importance to me to enter upon some occupation, as soon as possible, both for its own sake, as well as that of the emolument attached to it."

"Hem," replied Lord Windworth, with his peculiar smile.

"Verdure, and not Vienna," thought he to himself; "as if the very last recommendation for a place were not a man's being needy and wanting it!"

"May I ask you, Mr. Egerton, if you contemplate entering parliament?"

"No, my lord. I should be very glad to do so, but the fact is, I am not in a position to take such a step at present, nor do I see any prospect of a change in this respect. Then you think that I may look forward to obtaining the place your Lordship intended for me, in a few months?"

("Naive!" thought Lord Windworth, "baronetcy gone, can't enter parliament, and now asks for the place I promised him before this little change in his position!")

"I cannot make any definite promise at present, Mr. Egerton, but you may rest assured that if it is in my power to serve you, I shall be only too happy to do so. And now, I am afraid I must ask you to excuse me, as I see it is just one o'clock, and I expect the deputation directly from the Society for the Reform of the Dog's

Meat Trade. They propose to effect their object by establishing large central depots of dog's meat in all the principal towns. A grand idea, Mr. Egerton, a grand idea! It is really dreadful to think of the demoralization among the lower orders arising from intercourse with that reckless and migratory race, the dog's meat men. The statistical returns have shewn a very intimate connection between the prevalence of crime in any district, and the number of persons pursuing that degrading occupation, and well-authenticated conversations between them and the maidservants have been reported to me, which have strongly impressed me with the necessity of legislative interference. Good morning, Mr. Egerton, good morning."

With these words, Lord Windworth bowed Egerton out of the room, with that bland smile for which his Lordship is so justly celebrated.

"A very amiable young man, I dare say," thought Lord Windworth, "but not the man to waste a place upon for the sake of a mere promise. I could not tell him so outright, as Lord

Botherton introduced him. Besides it is clear that it is all off between him and old Dromedary's daughter, or he would not have been so hard up as he seems to be."

"A regular old humbug, if ever there was one," thought Egerton to himself, as he left Lord Windworth, "not the man to get a place from merely because he promised it. I felt very much inclined to tell him as much to his face, and I think I should if Lord Botherton had not introduced me to him."

After leaving Lord Windworth, Egerton called on his old travelling companion Pardow, and received such a hearty welcome, that the contrast after his lordship's condescending politeness, was extremely refreshing. Few modes of intercourse are so trying to an old friendship or so favorable to a new one as a pedestrian excursion, and although Egerton and Pardow had only spent a week in each other's society, they had exchanged confidences on a great variety of subjects, both personal and general. Egerton had told Pardow the peculiar position in which he

stood towards Bertha, without mentioning the nature of the objections which his father had entertained to the connection, and Pardow now listened with the greatest interest to his relation of all that had occurred since their former meeting.

"In the first place," said Pardow, "let me congratulate you on the truth of the lady. As to the refractory papa, I should not bother myself much about him. He is wrong that is clear, and will perhaps in time come to see the error of his ways. I don't know anything about him beyond what you have told me, but I cannot help thinking that the change in your own position has had considerable effect in producing the change in his feelings towards you."

"That is not unlikely," said Egerton, "and I am the more inclined to think so since I have seen the utter worldliness of worldly men, as instanced in Lord Windworth. Why, only a few weeks ago he was not merely polite but very friendly in his manner towards me, and actually promised me the place I wanted. This time, however, there was a sort of affable condescension

about him, which made me see at once that he regarded me as a sort of adventurer, an unlucky dog whom the world did not smile upon, and therefore unworthy of his lordship's notice. I have no patience with the disgusting littleness of such men. As far as contempt is concerned, I certainly am not behind his lordship, for I left him with as much of that sentiment towards his honorable self as I can well entertain towards any human being."

"Hulloa!" exclaimed Pardow, "That is getting on rather too fast. Where is your philosophy? It is quite clear that your rubs with the world are only commencing, or you would not talk in that style. Despise the thing, my dear sir, if you like and welcome, but don't despise the man till you have considered a little what his lordship's education has been."

"In his class, I should think the education ought to have been good enough. If not, where is one to look for such a thing?"

"There never was a greater fallacy," replied Pardow. "For making Latin verses or a figure

in society, a nobleman's education at Eton first, then Oxford or Cambridge, and London afterwards, may be good enough. But as far as all the higher objects of education are concerned, I believe there is no class more unfavourably situated."

"Indeed!" said Egerton. "How so?"

"Has he not been living in an atmosphere of toadyism from his cradle? How all the small boys in the neighbourhood of Weathercock Castle used to pull their hair when his infantile lordship in his velvet tunic, and with a groom behind him, rode past on his grey pony! Do you think that even at school, where such republican equality is supposed to prevail, do you think his youthful lordship perceived no difference between himself and others in the way he was treated? Did not precisely those boys who had the most toadyism, and therefore the least manliness, in their nature, discover his merits sooner than those of other boys, and give him a larger slice of cake and similar comestibles? And had not such boys an instinctive feeling

that it might be a fine thing to know a lord after they left school? And had the honorable infant no latent suspicion that he owed a large part of this kind consideration to his being heir to Weathercock Castle? Is that the sort of education to give the nobler part of a boy's character a fair chance?"

"There may be some truth in that," replied Egerton; "but if he really possessed a noble nature—"

"I am not saying that a really noble nature may not overcome the disadvantages of education, but those disadvantages exist all the same, and must be taken into our calculation when estimating the man. Follow him to the University. Besides the Latin verses alluded to, and a consciousness of the value of the heirship of Weathercock, there is in all probability no overpowering amount of ideas in his honourable noddle; but still he is immediately selected as the associate at meals of those men, who by their superior talents and industry have fought their way to academical distinction. I mean,

in short, that he dines at the fellows' table, and receives marked attention from the Rev. J. Frog, who has heard that the present incumbent at Weathercock is getting shaky. Is that toadyism nothing, think you, to develop the be-toadyism in his youthful mind? See him walk out of hall in blue and silver lace. How respectful are the gyps! See him again at the Union. What a promising young man he is considered to be as soon as he rises to address the House in defence of those grand Whig principles and that noble constitution which have made this great country what it is, meaning thereby, which have secured to him all this adulation without any risk of his losing it through a revolution. He is not to be blamed for all this. He has found it ready made for him, and as it is not absolutely disagreeable to his feelings, he enters no protest against it; but it cannot fail to do its work on him, and sad work too. When he comes to London, is he not courted by mammas with marriageable daughters? If Fortune should make him a minister, and he has power and place at his disposal, does he not

find himself the interesting centre of intrigue, and is he not courted by precisely those men who have the least independent English feeling about them? Why, sir, I regard the education of a young nobleman, who afterwards becomes a statesman, to be precisely the very severest trial to which a character can be exposed. He has had everything to make him worldly himself, and to prevent his believing in anything higher in others."

"Still," replied Egerton, "among noblemen, there are many noble men, and—"

"Unquestionably; but it is very much to their credit, for it is in spite, and not in virtue of their supposed advantages. We have no right to quarrel with a man for not being able to rise superior to the narrow views the world has been trying to teach him all his life. No, my dear Egerton, you must learn not to mind such little rubs, or I would not give a pin for your philosophy. I have lived some fifteen or twenty years longer in the world than you have. I have had a fair share of buffeting, and a fair

share of snubs. At first it used to make me angry and indignant. That was the lowest state; then my indignation gave way to contempt; that was a degree better, but a very small one, for my contempt was no very distant relation of hatred. I was still, you see, in a very militant state, but it was quite as much with the frail as with their frailties. At last I began to philosophize, and to ask myself whether this militant state of feeling were, after all, such a very noble one. The answer was soon found, and in the negative; I saw that there were far greater heights to be scaled than any I had yet reached, if I wished for a true, philosophic peace. Depend upon it, if you take the highest point of view—which is, of course, the only true one—you will see that unmerited slights injure the slighter only, and not the slighted. You will then cease to fret and fume at such things—all which is mere littleness—as it arises from wounded personal feeling. You may regret perhaps that those who offer them have not been able to appreciate you more justly, but you will

endeavour to put yourself in their position, and judge them charitably."

"I believe," said Egerton, thoughtfully, "that you are right in the main, but still I cannot help thinking, a little honest, hearty indignation at what one abhors as morally base, mean, and contemptible, to be a very healthy feeling."

"I agree with you entirely," said Pardow, "except that I should say a good deal of such indignation is better than a little. But before you transfer your indignation from the mean action to the mean actor, consider a little in what sort of atmosphere he has lived. You do not expect to find high notions of honesty in the child of a London pickpocket, and yet that is hardly more unreasonable than to expect a noble, unworldly tone of thought in a man who has breathed nothing but the tainted atmosphere of toadyism, and has rarely been addressed except with a degree of servile respect to which his personal qualities do not entitle him."

"Why what an out and out radical you are, Pardow! that idea, carried to its legitimate con-

clusion, would lead to the abolition of all aristocracy whatever."

"You are getting a little too fast there," replied Pardow. "I much doubt, if, with the present constitution of human nature, a state of things without an aristocracy of some sort is conceivable. Every social position offers its peculiar trials and temptations, and I have only pointed out what I consider to be some of those to which the aristocracy are more especially exposed, and the reason why we should not judge their frailties too severely. The merchant is tempted to speculate beyond his capital, the lawyer to find excuses for something like sharp practice, the clergyman to continue the profession of a creed he has begun to doubt, that he may not have to resign his living; but I do not on that account advocate the abolition of either merchants, lawyers, or clergymen. In the same manner the nobility are tempted to treat their fellow men with hauteur, or impertinent condescension, and sometimes indeed to consider themselves exempted from observing the rules of cour-

tesy towards them. What they deem the advantage, is really the misfortune of their position, but I do not say, on that account that there should be no nobles."

"You have given me something to think about," said Egerton, "and I already begin to regard Lord Windworth's conduct with a little less acrimony. But I must confess," he added, smiling, "that my philosophy has not quite reached the last stadium yet."

"Never mind," said Pardow, "it will come all in good time. You only want a few more hearty good rubs, and I sincerely hope you may soon get them. That is the only road to the true philosophic peace."

"Thank you," said Egerton laughing. "But now I must wish you good morning, for I have letters to write, and shall be too late for the post."

"Good morning. I shall call on you soon," said Pardow. "Pray remember that whenever

you are feeling savage with the world and its treatment of you, you have only to let me know, and I will give you another good preaching. No thanks, my dear fellow. I shall do it with great pleasure."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER Egerton's departure from Stonecombe, Bertha perceived a marked change in her father's manner towards herself which affected her very painfully. He avoided anything like conversation with either of his daughters, and the few observations which he did make during meals, or on the other occasions on which the family were assembled, were addressed exclusively to Mary. Although Mr. Campbell's domestic rule had always been rather despotic, yet the good temper and amiable disposition of both his daughters had prevented any little difference of

opinion respecting its justice, from assuming a serious character. On no previous occasion had either of them resisted his clearly expressed will, and Bertha's present assertion of her claim to the liberty of forming an independent judgment in a matter so nearly concerning her own happiness, had so astonished him by its audacity, that he entirely overlooked the question of the rights of the case, as one of far minor importance. It was an act of rebellion to his lawful authority, and he resented it accordingly.

Three dreary days had passed in this manner, and Mr. Campbell still maintained the same obstinate and sullen reserve in his demeanour towards his daughter as at first. She had flattered herself with the fond hope that the daily sight of her wretchedness might exercise some softening influence on his feelings, and perhaps induce him eventually to relent. But she now found it impossible to deceive herself any longer; for it was only too evident that he would listen to no other terms of reconciliation than those of unconditional surrender.

Mary was hardly less unhappy than her sister, for besides the gloom thrown over the family circle by so bitter a dissension, she could see no possibility of its ever being brought to a satisfactory termination. The delicacy of her health, moreover, made her less able to bear up against the sadness that oppressed her, and the cough with which she had been troubled during the two preceding winters had already returned, although the days were still long, and the deep green of summer was yet unvaried by a single tint of Autumn.

The once cheerful meal of breakfast had nearly concluded in the same distressing silence as usual, when Richard brought in the letter bag and placed it on the table beside Mr. Campbell. He unlocked it, and having laid aside several which were addressed to himself, at length came to one which appeared to excite no very agreeable sensations in his mind; he looked at the address for a few seconds, and then handing it to Bertha, said in a hard, stern voice: "This letter is for you, Miss Campbell."

Miss Campbell! Had she then become so little to him that he should address her as an utter stranger! The tears started to her eyes, for the words rang in her ears as the knell of the affection she had prized so dearly, but which now seemed lost to her for ever. A glance at the handwriting shewed the cause of his displeasure. She hid the letter in her dress, and having hurriedly finished her breakfast, was about to leave the room.

"Stop, Miss Campbell," said her father, sternly, "I have a few words to say to you, and had better say them at once. You need not go, Mary," he continued, "I wish you should both understand the true nature of a child's disobedience, and the punishment it entails. I can see by the handwriting, that that letter is from Mr. Egerton. Was it written with your sanction?"

"It was," said Bertha in a low, clear voice.

"Then I am to understand that you do not intend to break off all communication with him in compliance with my express commands."

"My dear, dear father," said Bertha earnestly. "You know not what you ask of me. I have—"

"I do not wish for any further scenes, Miss Campbell; I think we have had enough of them already. I must beg for a simple answer to a simple question. Do you intend to break off all intercourse with Mr. Egerton, or do you not?"

"I do not," said Bertha, firmly. "Words have passed between us which give him a claim that I cannot refuse to acknowledge as long as my feelings towards him remain the same."

"I asked for no sentimental justifications. I merely wished to know the fact. You are of age, Miss Campbell, and must choose your own line of conduct. I shall also choose mine; and to prevent any misunderstanding between us, I beg to inform you, that I shall give instructions this very day for the preparation of a new will. By your present disobedience, you have forfeited all claims upon me, but I shall treat you better than you deserve. I shall leave you three thou-

sand pounds, instead of about eighty, which you would otherwise have had, and I shall attach to it the condition that you do not marry Mr. Egerton, in which case you will receive nothing."

"It is not from interested motives that I speak again, my dear father; but because I feel that this sad difference between us is breaking my heart—I cannot bear it," she continued, with the tears streaming down her face, "indeed I cannot, it will kill me. I love you, father, I love you dearly—Mary knows it, you know it yourself. I have always been an affectionate daughter to you—at least I am sure I have tried to be so. Oh, do call me Bertha again! I would gladly give up all claim to your worldly goods, if you would but leave me my old place in your heart."

Mr. Campbell seemed moved.

"Only obey me, Bertha," he said, "and it is yours."

"But I have given Mr. Egerton my love; I have promised to be his wife, and with your full consent, and now I feel that he has obtained

claims which you cannot demand that he should forego. Obedience to you in this would be disobedience to the dictates of my own conscience, and thus the disobedience which has called forth your resentment against your unhappy daughter has become her duty."

"Disobedience to a father a duty? A strange doctrine that!" exclaimed Mr. Campbell, indignantly.

"If disobedience to a father is obedience to a higher law," said Bertha, "I think that—"

"A higher law? What higher law can there be than a father's commands?"

"The laws of God, which command us not to break our faith to others," replied Bertha, in a very low but distinct voice.

"Upon my word, Miss Campbell," said her father, bitterly, "you understand how to find plausible reasons for your own private inclinations. But they shall not avail with me. I will not enter into any discussion of the absurd Quixotic notions with which your unfortunate attachment has inspired you; it would be mere

loss of time. But I will tell you one thing that may perhaps be worth your consideration. If you do not give up all idea of marrying the man whose father's last act was to offer me the greatest insult I have ever received in the course of my life, I say that if you do not give him up immediately, I will disinherit you entirely, as well as cast you from my heart. My last words to Mr. Egerton were, that I would not cross the street to save him from ruin. Take care, or I may repeat them to yourself."

"Cruel!" said Bertha, "cruel!"

She rose from her chair to leave the room. Mary saw directly that her sister was hardly able to walk, and ran to her assistance, but before she could reach her, Bertha sank into a chair, and sobbed hysterically.

"Oh dear," said Mr. Campbell, somewhat moved, "perhaps I have been a little too violent." Then, fearing lest the remark might seem like a confession, he continued: "You see, Mary, by your sister's example, the dreadful consequences of disobedience. I will send Ellen

to you, and then you can get Bertha to her own room. She had better lie down on the sofa for a little while, and keep quite quiet this morning."

Mr. Campbell left the breakfast parlour, and sent Ellen to Mary's assistance.

"Silly girl!" he said to himself as he entered his study, "I thought she had more sense than to entertain such romantic notions. I am not the man, however," he continued, ringing the bell at the same moment; "I am not the man, to give up my purpose for a fit of hysterics. Tell Evans to go to Mr. Walker, with my compliments, and say I should be glad to see him at his earliest convenience."

An hour afterwards Evans brought the intelligence that Mr. Walker had left Stonecombe on business two days before, and had said that he should probably not return till the end of the week at the earliest.

"Well, well, a couple of days will not make any great difference," said Mr. Campbell to himself. "My purpose is not likely to cool in a hurry."

As soon as Bertha had a little recovered herself, she felt for Egerton's letter, but in vain; she could not find it.

"How careless," she exclaimed, "I suppose I must have dropped it in the breakfast parlour."

"I will go and look for it," said Mary.

Mary searched everywhere, but without success. At last it occurred to her that perhaps her father might have seen it and picked it up. She rather dreaded asking him, but Mary could be courageous where Bertha was concerned, and she went immediately to the study. She knocked at the door, but hearing no answer, opened it without one.

Her father was standing with the open letter from Sir Roderick in one hand, and Egerton's unopened in the other, gazing at them alternately. There was an expression on his countenance which made Mary exclaim almost involuntarily:

"Poor Bertha!"

The words first attracted his attention to her

presence. Fearing they might arouse his anger afresh, she coloured deeply as he looked up, and asked fiercely what she wanted.

“Bertha has lost her letter, papa, and I thought perhaps you might have picked it up.”

“There is the precious document, Mary. No wonder she should value it, for it will have cost her a fortune.”

“Oh, papa, how I wish—”

“What, you too, Mary! Go, my girl, go. I don’t want to quarrel with both of you.”

Mary returned to her sister.

“Thank you, thank you, Mary,” said Bertha to her sister, “I have been so alarmed lest you should not be able to find it. Where was it?”

“Papa had picked it up.”

“Tell me candidly, Mary, do you think there is any hope that in time he may relent?”

“Do not let us talk of these painful subjects just now,” replied Mary.

Bertha was too interested in the letter to press the question. She hastily broke the seal, and read the contents, which were as follows:—

17, — Street, London.

“ This time last week, dearest Bertha, I was sitting with you on the seat in the Willow Walk, reading aloud the Miller’s Daughter. How completely did the tone of quiet happiness which pervades it, harmonize with our own feelings! How bright the sun seemed to shine both in our hearts within, and on the world without, and how little did we anticipate the coming storm! Only a few days have elapsed since then, and now, all is changed. Yes, dearest, all. While my happiness seemed so easily within my reach, I hardly prized it at its full worth; but as my hopes have grown weaker my love has grown stronger, and has taken a more earnest tone. I feel now that I have hitherto looked on life rather too presumptuously. I have been accustomed to regard its struggles as affecting my own happiness far less than the amount of my future accomplishment in behalf of others. My career was to be a series of triumphs against social evils, and the only question was the greatness of my victories. When I gazed upon your beauty,

dearest, and revelled in the thought that I possessed your love, both the beauty and the love seemed like fitting ornaments for a future that promised so fair, indeed like a song of triumph to welcome my successes. This was indeed a vainglorious feeling. I see now that we do not hold life on such holiday terms, and that his own suffering is the only school for the man who would alleviate that of others. When I think of your beauty now, dearest Bertha, it is with less of exaltation and more of tenderness. I remember its pensive depth more gladly than its brilliancy. It is no longer the song of triumph to a conqueror—it is rather a solemn chaunt for a worshipper to listen to with prayer and praise.

“This may seem an odd preface to the question I am now going to propose for your consideration. But I feel that it is only due to both, that you should know the strength as well as constancy of my feelings before you decide on our future destiny.

“I well know, dearest Bertha, how much you

love your father, and how severe a pang it will cost you to continue your engagement with me should he persist in withholding his sanction. In the first moment of that bitter strife you generously declared your intention of not allowing me to suffer through his injustice. I heard your words with a joy which almost repaid me for the pain of the interview that preceded them. But on calm consideration, I think it would not be honourable to attempt to hold you to vows made under such different circumstances. No, dearest, I cannot demand that you should sacrifice your father's love to that which you bear for myself. If you wish for freedom, it is yours. However you may decide, I shall never have an unkind thought of you, nor shall I value less dearly the memory of what has passed between us.

“I have felt the more strongly that I ought to release you since my interview with Lord Windworth yesterday morning. I grieve to say it has been far from satisfactory. He received me with politeness, but when I alluded to the subject, he only answered me with general protestations

of his desire to serve me, and I soon saw that all hopes from that quarter were at an end. Had I been Sir Henry, with a seat in Parliament, it might have been otherwise. I much fear that it will be a long time before I can offer you a new home, and that your own will be a far from happy one as long as our engagement subsists.

“ If, dearest Bertha, your own heart tells you that I have become more to you than even a father’s love, I do not think that duty requires you to dissolve an engagement which you entered into with his full approbation. I can easily conceive that my father’s letter must have wounded him deeply, and *that* perhaps, where he is most sensitive. But Sir Roderick is now no more, and it would be very hard upon the living if they were always to be sacrificed to the prejudices of the dead. After the painful scene, however, which I had with your father, nothing but the conviction that your happiness is as completely bound up in mine, as mine is in yours, could reconcile me to the continuance of our engagement.

If you decide on being mine, we will place our trust in God, and look forward to brighter days. In giving me your affection, he will have given me so great a boon, that I can hardly believe he will stay his hand there, and deny us the means of rendering to each other through life that mutual aid and support, which we can derive in equal measure from no other earthly source. Let me hear from you soon, dearest, and do not forget to tell me how you are, and whether your father treats you with his former kindness. God bless you, Bertha, as also

“Your ever affectionate,

“HENRY EGERTON.”

“P. S. I have just received the enclosed from Lord Windworth’s private secretary; it shews that my estimate of his lordship was tolerably correct.”

The following was the enclosure alluded to:

“SIR,

“Lord Windworth has directed me to inform

you that circumstances over which he has no control will entirely put it out of his power to give you the appointment which was the subject of your conversation with him on the — inst. His Lordship desires me to express his sincere regret at his inability to serve you at present, and the hope that he may be more fortunate on some future occasion.

“I remain, Sir,

“Your most obedient servant,

“JAMES WEATHERLY.”

“Poor Henry!” exclaimed Bertha, when she had finished reading.

“Has anything happened!” asked Mary.

“Lord Windworth has refused him the place. The thought is all the more painful when I look round and see the luxury in which we are living. But you did not answer my question, Mary. Do you think there is the least hope that papa will ever relent?”

Mary remembered the expression of her father’s face when she had seen him with Eger-

ton's letter in his hand, and felt that she could not honestly give her sister any consolation.

"No, Bertha," she said, "I do not. I think papa's feelings are too much embittered against Sir Roderick, perhaps even against Henry, to allow of his ever giving way."

"Then," said Bertha, "my fate will be a very sad one, to have to choose between my father and my affianced husband. And yet in one sense the choice is easy, for I feel no doubts."

"Oh, Bertha," exclaimed Mary, "surely you will not marry Mr. Egerton without papa's consent?"

"If he will take me portionless as I am," said Bertha, gravely, "and of that I can doubt as little as I do of myself. I wonder sometimes what he has found in me that has called forth in him such strong feelings; but that he loves me as passionately as I do him, I must believe, for where should I look for truth if not in him? He has often told me of the strength and support he would derive from such a love as ours; and

do you think, Mary, I could ever wish for any higher or happier lot than to aid one so noble? If he is unfortunate it would be still baser to desert him."

"But to marry without a father's consent, Bertha! I think I could never be happy if my marriage had not my father's blessing."

"Our love *has* been sanctioned by his consent, Mary, though I fear it may never have his blessing. To reject Henry now would be to cast a blight over many of his best years, if not over his whole life, and this would be a grievous wrong. No, Mary, my conscience is quite clear, and if I ever have to make that terrible choice, it will be made with a heavy heart, but with no misgivings as to the rightness of my conduct."

"Well, whatever you may do, Bertha," said Mary, kissing her sister, "we will never cease to love each other; and perhaps in time papa may forgive you too."

"God grant it!" said Bertha. "By the bye, I do not think Evans has taken the letters yet. If I write directly I may still be in time."

"Then you must be very quick, for he will go in ten minutes at latest."

Bertha immediately wrote the following letter, and just succeeded in completing it in time.

"MY DEAREST HENRY,

"The letters are going to the post almost directly, but I cannot bear that your suspense as to my answer to your generous offer should continue one moment longer than necessary. I require no time for consideration. When I gave you my love, I gave it entirely, and without reserve. Every word in your dear letter convinces me that your affection for me is as pure and as self-sacrificing as it is deep, and I feel that I should be wrong indeed were I to throw away so rich a blessing out of respect to prejudices which I do not share. Come what may, I shall ever remain,

"Yours, and yours only,

"BERTHA CAMPBELL."

CHAPTER III.

BERTHA took her meals that day in her own room. Mr. Campbell made no comment on her absence, and endeavoured to converse with Mary on indifferent subjects, as if to shew that his angry feelings did not extend to her. But the conversation soon flagged, for Mary was too much depressed to be able to take her share in it, and she felt it to be a great relief when the cloth was removed and she was able to return to her sorrowing sister.

The tea passed off in the same gloomy manner as the dinner had done before it, and the few

attempts at something like a more cheerful tone were so evidently forced, that they only served to make the depression of both father and daughter more painfully evident to each. There were tears in Mary's eyes, when she kissed her father and wished him good night, but he took no notice of them. She left the room, and Mr. Campbell was alone.

Was the "Westminster Review" less interesting than usual, or how was it that half an hour had elapsed and Mr. Campbell's eyes still rested vacantly on the first page? Again and again did he try to understand the meaning of the writer, but it was to no purpose; his thoughts would not be commanded even by that will in the strength of which he prided himself so mightily. Sometimes he seemed to hear Bertha's words, "Cruel! cruel!" as she had sunk under the violence of his anger, and something like a feeling of remorse stole into his heart unbidden. But then again he saw before him the picture of a dying man, employing the last remnant of his failing strength to write words of insult,

a man whom he had loved in his youth, and hated for long years since, and his daughter's words were forgotten, and his heart was hardened as before.

The door bell rang. Visitors at so late an hour were not frequent at Oakwood. Voices were heard in the hall, and immediately afterwards Thomas entered the room.

"If you please, sir, a gentleman is here who has inquired for Mr. Egerton. I told him he was not here, and then he asked for you."

"What can make him come at this time of night? Tell him to call to-morrow," said Mr. Campbell, to whom Egerton's name was not a very good letter of recommendation.

Thomas withdrew, but returned again immediately.

"If you please, sir, he says he has come from Mr. Patterson, on business of importance, and wishes particularly to see you to-night, as he must return to London by the early train to-morrow."

"From Mr. Patterson! What can Patterson

have to tell me of such importance that he must send a messenger? Shew him in directly."

"I am a clerk of Mr. Patterson's," said the stranger, as he entered the room. He has a communication of great importance to make to Mr. Egerton, and thought I should find him here, but desired me, in case he was not, to give you this letter."

"Pray take a seat, sir." (Perhaps the child is dead, and he is a baronet after all, thought Mr. Campbell). "Pray take a seat, sir."

Mr. Campbell opened the letter, which was to the following effect:—

"Lincoln's Inn Fields, Aug. 184—.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"About ten days ago I concluded the arrangements for investing the £5,000 which Mr. Egerton takes under his mother's settlement in a good mortgage, and accordingly sold out the stock, and placed the amount to his account with Sir James Peter and Co. Through the merest accident, however, I have just learnt that the affairs

of that house are in a very critical position, and that, in all probability they will suspend their payments in the course of a day or two. I am, of course, extremely anxious that Mr. Egerton should be immediately apprised of these unfortunate circumstances, that he may withdraw the money while there is yet time. Should he have left Oakwood, you would much oblige me, by giving Mr. Brownlow, the bearer of this, Mr. Egerton's address, or informing him how he can learn it. As Mr. Egerton is shortly to become a member of your family, I trust you will consider no apology necessary for my troubling you in this manner, the more so indeed as the sum in question constitutes his whole fortune.

"Believe me, dear sir,

"Yours very truly,

"RICHARD PATTERSON."

"I will write a few lines to Mr. Patterson directly," said Mr. Campbell; "but I dare say you would be glad of some refreshment, Mr. Brownlow," he continued, ringing the bell

at the same moment. "Have you had any tea?"

"No, sir, thank you," replied Mr. Brownlow; "but if you would be kind enough to give me Mr. Egerton's address, there is no reason why you should trouble yourself with writing to Mr. Patterson at all."

"I prefer writing," said Mr. Campbell, rather coldly. "Take tea and cold meat into the dining-room, for Mr. Brownlow directly, Thomas. Or perhaps you would prefer a glass of wine."

"No thank you, Mr. Campbell; I hope you will excuse me, sir, but my orders from Mr. Patterson are to proceed to Mr. Egerton's address wherever that may be, and I should therefore feel much obliged if you would tell it me, instead of writing to Mr. Patterson, as that will occasion the loss of much valuable time."

"I do not know Mr. Egerton's address, sir, and therefore cannot give it you. If you will be so kind as to walk into that room, the servant will bring you some refreshment immediately."

Mr. Campbell wished to get rid of Mr. Brown-

low, as he wanted a little time for consideration.

“Egerton is a beggar,” he said to himself, with a feeling of exultation, “and his fate depends upon me. I have his fortunes in the hollow of my hand, and can crush him as I would a noxious insect. I told him three days ago, I would not cross the street to save him from ruin; and I meant it too. I repeated it to Bertha this morning. Shall I be weak enough to shew that my words were a mere empty threat? Never! never! I can write to Mr. Patterson with perfect truth that I do not know where Egerton is. It is true, I could find it out in two minutes from Bertha, for she had a letter from him this morning; but I gave him fair warning—I told him we were perfect strangers to each other from this time, and he has no right to complain if I carry out my threat. Had he yielded at once to my wishes, instead of urging Bertha to open rebellion against her father, it would have been a different thing. But he has sown dissension in a family in which it was unknown before, and

must suffer the punishment of his most unjustifiable conduct. He has made his bed and must lie on it. My mind is made up, he may starve for me before I will move a finger. Besides, if I save him from ruin I am merely giving him the means to set me at defiance. It would be the act of a fool."

Mr. Campbell sat down to his desk, and wrote the following letter:—

"Oakwood, Aug. 184—

"MY DEAR SIR,

"In reply to your favour of to-day, I beg to state that I am not acquainted with Mr. Egerton's address. I take this opportunity of correcting a little error into which you have not unnaturally fallen. It is true that Mr Egerton was formerly engaged to Miss Campbell, but his conduct lately, as well as other circumstances, have rendered it imperative on me to put an end to that engagement.

"I remain, dear sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"JOHN CAMPBELL."

Mr. Campbell read the letter over after he had written it, but it did not seem to satisfy him, and he hesitated before he enclosed it in an envelope.

He looked up from his writing table; something hanging by the side of the fireplace caught his eye. It was a very little thing,—not very ornamental perhaps—but as Bertha's first attempt at fancy work when a little girl, and a present to her father on his birthday, it had never been removed from its nail. It had hung there for years, and he had rarely given it a thought. It was nothing but a little canvass kettle holder, now yellow with age, ornamented with a blue fringe, and bearing the inscription in worsted:—"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Directly above it hung a little picture of Bertha, taken when she was eight years old. The round, young, innocent face almost seemed to repeat the words! Memories of the past thronged fast upon him. How gentle and affectionate she had always been to himself and all around her! How she had

watched for two long months by his sick bed! How she had borne with his irritability when others had resented it! And was the deliberate ruin of the man she loved the return he was now going to make her for all that she had been to him?

The words "cruel, cruel," rang in his ears once more, and for a moment at least, he felt that they were deserved. He snatched up the sheet he had just been covering with that unfeeling equivocation (for he could not conceal from himself that it was one), and moved it towards the candle. But as he did so, his eye fell on Sir Roderick's half finished letter. Some fiend must have placed it there. He stayed his hand.

"Sentimental folly!" he exclaimed, "how could I be so weak? Has she not herself obliterated the past by her obstinate refusal to listen to a father's commands; and does not the respect she owes to herself, as well as to me, forbid her ever to enter the family of that proud 'old aristocrat? Besides, I have told him I would have

nothing more to do with him, and shall I recant three days afterwards? Never, never! it shall go; it shall go. He shall reap the fruits of his father's insolent pride."

Mr. Campbell sealed and addressed the letter, and to prevent the possibility of any embarrassing enquiries sent it in to Mr. Brownlow by a servant with many apologies for not being able to see him again, as the state of his health made it necessary that he should keep good hours.

Bertha appeared at breakfast the next morning as usual. She was very pale, but not more so than her father, who had hardly slept all night. After the first good morning, they did not exchange a syllable. Bertha would gladly have made an attempt at conversation, but she felt that if she were to speak, she would hardly be able to refrain from tears; and she feared the renewal of a scene, which could have no other effect than that of increasing her father's irritation.

Mr. Campbell's studies in the Westminster

did not advance very favourably that day. Have you ever known, reader, what it is to have a few bars of some well known opera air in your head, and not be able to drive them out? There they go, hammering on, hour after hour, and day after day, and leave one no rest, no peace. One may say—"They *shall* cease; by the force of my will alone, I will lay this wearisome ghost, it shall torture me no longer with its endless repetition." Vain boast! your imagination is silent about five seconds, and then—there they come—stealing in—note after note—the old tune, the old time, till you begin to think they have worn a hole in your brain, and taken up their residence in it permanently. That is bad enough, reader, but there is something far worse, which we hope you have never known. Instead of a tune, let this restless ghost take the form of words,—each syllable a sting of conscience or a feverish hope, and the whole sentence, a wearing, aching pain that knows no alleviation, but brands its meaning into the soul, till it is filled with the one fixed idea. If you have ever had that sad expe-

rience, you will understand how it was that Mr. Campbell's studies in the Westminster did not progress very rapidly that morning

"Perhaps it is not yet too late," were the words he heard in endless repetition. "Per—haps—it—is—not—yet—too—late. Per—haps—it—is—not—yet—too—late." Happy would it have been for you, Mr. Campbell, if the song had ended there. But then came the burthen. "But—no—I—won't. But—no—I—won't." He laid down his book, he paced the room; he looked out of the window and counted the number of tulips in a bed near the window, but to no purpose, for each tulip took up a syllable of the song, and no fact was more strongly impressed on his mind than that there were eight syllables in the first line, and four in the burthen. Once indeed he suppressed the burthen for a few minutes. He even rang the bell and told Thomas that Evans was to saddle a horse directly and ride over to B—— in time to catch the one o'clock up train. But before Evans was ready, Mr. Campbell remembered that he had to apply

to Bertha for the substance of the message, namely, Egerton's address, and then came the burthen more triumphant than ever: "But—no—I—won't. But—no—I—won't," and he rang the bell again, and countermanded the order.

The day passed heavily away. The night succeeded, but brought no sleep to Mr. Campbell's restless couch. Five thousand pounds! His all! The very number seemed to haunt him. He brought it into shillings, into sixpences, pence, farthings. He could not help himself,—he must work on that sum whether he would or no. First he had to calculate what the interest would be at four and a half per cent., then how much that sum gave as income, monthly, weekly, daily. There was no rest for Mr. Campbell's brain that night. No sleep till he compelled it by a dose of laudanum. He rose the next morning pale, haggard, weary; he saw the tulips again that he had counted the day before, and the old weary sounds returned; "Per—haps—it—is—not—yet—too—late. Per—haps—it—is—not—yet—too—late."

Towards the end of that silent, sullen, breakfast, the "Times" was brought him. How the old man clutched it, and with trembling fingers tore it open, and turned over its broad leaves till he found the City article. "Sir James Peter," were the words he sought. No, they were not there. "Per—haps—it—is—not—yet—too—late." But the burthen followed as before, and Evans had no ride that morning.

The long hours passed heavily on, and luncheon time arrived, but the Westminster remained uncut. The old song, the old burthen; another such day and he thought it would drive him mad. Bertha's pale, worn look, too, and Mary's eyes red with weeping!

"Ah," thought he, "Bertha's cheek would be paler yet, and Mary's eyes still redder, if they knew all."

They seemed to him like suffering angels, and by their very presence to make his own heart, with its evil passions, assume a yet blacker hue.

The evening came, and Mr. Campbell determined

to take tea alone in his study. The longest day must have an end, and the darkness closed in at length, but he ordered no candles. He knew he could not read, and he preferred the darkness, for it seemed to harmonize better with the deep gloom that overspread his own soul. He paced up and down the spacious apartment, and occasionally paused at the window, but he could see nothing save the dense shade of the trees that surrounded the lawn, and the dull, heavy clouds above them.

"Not a single star to be seen," he said musingly to himself. "The gloom without, only equalled by that within. I have sinned—grievously sinned! Oh, God, that I could pray! But my heart is too dark. Not a ray of light—not one."

At this moment there was a slight glimmer above the old ash trees, very slight, but distinctly visible. It increased in extent and brightness. The moon was emerging from behind a cloud. His imagination had connected the former darkness with that which

reigned in his own soul, and he now tried to establish the relation yet more firmly—to grasp the outward symbol and give it spiritual meaning, that also the light without might be followed by light within. It was not often that that proud man knelt in solitary prayer, but he did so now; and the moon's rays fell on many objects less worthy in the sight of God that night than on the grey hairs of the old man, as he bowed his head and sued for grace to Him who alone can grant it.

He rose the next morning with a lighter heart than he had known since the arrival of that sad message, and the despatch of its still sadder answer. "Perhaps—it—is—not—yet—too—late," still rang in his ears, but now only as a bright hope, for the burthen that had once followed it, was silenced.

Mr. Campbell had resolved that the instant breakfast was over he would learn Egerton's address from Bertha, and despatch Evans to London by the first train. With what eagerness did he watch the door in expectation of the

arrival of the "Times!" His daughters looked on in mute amazement as he tore off the band and sought so eagerly that one column which was pregnant for him with such deep meaning. Good God! There it is. His eyes fell on the fatal words—

"Sir James Peter and Co." He read no more. "It *is* too late!" he exclaimed, as he sank back in his chair and gasped for breath.

Neither Bertha nor Mary had the courage to inquire the cause of his emotion, as, while he was in his present mood, they feared to touch upon any painful subject. But they could not help seeing how his hand trembled as he passed his cup, and how his eye avoided theirs, and a vague dread of some new source of grief weighed heavily upon both.

And what was the effect of those few words on Mr. Campbell? Did he fully and freely confess his sin to God, and pray for forgiveness? Alas! far from it. The thought that his act was really and truly such as it had seemed to him the night before, was wormwood to his

proud spirit, and he directed the whole force of his mind to the justification of himself, and the blackening of the character of the man he had wronged. He read and re-read Sir Roderick's letter; he distorted every word that had fallen from Egerton or Bertha till their conduct looked like an act of premeditated insult and defiance. In short, he pondered over every aggravating circumstance till he had lashed up his resentment to a higher pitch than it had reached before, and till he regarded himself as the only injured party, and his former penitence of the night before as an act of momentary weakness, only proving the goodness of his heart. He was indeed a martyr in his own eyes, whereas in reality he had taken to himself seven other spirits more wicked than the first.

CHAPTER IV.

Just as the family at Oakwood were sitting down to luncheon, Mr. Walker was announced. Uncongenial as that gentleman's society had always been considered by the ladies, his visit was now felt to be a relief by all the party. After the conclusion of the meal, Mr. Campbell requested him to follow him to his study.

"I called this morning, Mr. Campbell," said the attorney, "because I heard you wanted to see me the instant I returned."

"I am much obliged to you for your promptness, Mr. Walker, and will explain at once the

nature of the business upon which I wished to see you. It is hardly necessary for me to remind a professional man like yourself, that I expect you to exercise the strictest discretion, and not to communicate to any living soul, the changes in the arrangements I intend to make respecting my property."

"You may trust me, Mr. Campbell, I assure you. From long habit, discretion has become a part of my nature, and I believe that were I placed on the rack, not a syllable of your highly valued confidence would ever be extorted from—"

"Enough, sir. I simply wished to remind you of your duty in this respect, and I would further observe that I do not desire any comment on the dispositions I am going to make. I do not, therefore, consult you about them, but merely ask your professional aid in carrying them out."

Mr. Walker bowed acquiescence.

"It is my intention to make a new will, and I should wish to have it prepared as speedily as

possible. I might, perhaps attain the same end by a codicil, but I have thought the matter over, and have come to the conclusion that a new will is the more advisable plan. The legacies to servants and all such minor arrangements are to be the same as in the former will, which you prepared for me two years ago. I wish then to leave five thousand pounds to Miss Campbell, subject to the condition that she does not marry Mr. Egerton, and the whole residue, both real and personal, to my second daughter, Mary. Dr. Freeman and my nephew, Herbert, to be the executors, with a legacy to the former of £1000. The trusts, moreover, of Mary's portion are to be the same as in the old will. In short, the only change I wish to make is that Miss Campbell is to take £5000 subject to the condition I have mentioned, and her sister to take the residue, instead of their dividing equally."

"So my shot at Egerton has taken effect!" thought Mr. Walker, who, having only just returned from the country, had not yet heard of Egerton's summary dismissal.

"Excuse the liberty I am taking, Mr. Campbell, but there are circumstances connected with your property of which you are not aware, and which, I believe, would materially affect your intentions respecting it."

"Circumstances connected with my property of which I am not aware!" said Mr. Campbell in astonishment. "Really, Mr. Walker, I flatter myself I know as much about my property as you do, and rather more too. Explain yourself, Sir, explain yourself."

"I will do so, Mr. Campbell; but I must first beg you to remember that, though my communication may be an extremely unwelcome one, I make it entirely in your interest, and out of regard for your welfare."

"I am not in a mood for trifling, Mr. Walker, and must therefore beg you to remember that if you contemplate any interference, beyond the strict line of your professional assistance, I shall regard it as in the highest degree impertinent, and shall resent it as such."

"Supposing, Mr. Campbell, I could prove that, in leaving Miss Campbell five thousand pounds, you leave her about the half of your property, instead of somewhat less than a thirtieth part, as I believe you imagine?"

Mr. Campbell looked at Mr. Walker to see if there was any appearance of his being intoxicated. He could see none, and was obliged to conclude that he had spoken in earnest, but was quite at a loss to divine his meaning.

"I thought, Mr. Walker, you knew me well enough to be aware that I am not the man to understand joking on such subjects, and must, therefore, beg you to drop all this tomfoolery for the present, and come to business."

"I never was more serious in my life, Mr. Campbell."

"Why, good Heavens! Sir, are you mad? What do you suppose to be the value of Oakwood?"

"Well," said Mr. Walker, casting an easy glance around the room, as if he were taking an

estimate of the furniture, "I suppose a hundred and ten to twenty thousand would not be too high a figure."

"Then what the devil, sir, do you mean? Five thousand pounds, the half of my property, and yet Oakwood alone worth a hundred and twenty!"

"I mean nothing more than this, Mr. Campbell, that Oakwood is not legally yours. Please, Mr. Campbell," he continued, seeing a gesture of extreme surprise and impatience on the part of that gentleman, "please, sir, hear me to an end. I could prove to-morrow, if I liked, that you have not one tittle of a claim to Oakwood, nor to much of the other property you now hold. But I alone possess these proofs. They are known to no other human being besides myself. Now, sir, I give you my honour that I will maintain the most inviolable secrecy on this subject, and that you shall enjoy your property unmolested to the end of your days, on one condition, but on that only."

"Really, Mr. Walker, your great kindness

and consideration are quite overpowering. And may I ask what the condition is, on which you will allow me to retain possession of my estates?"

"In a case like the present, sir, I must speak out plainly. My heart's best affections have long lain at the feet of that paradox of her sex, your eldest daughter. Fondly cherished dreams of one day seeing her the mistress of my humble home, consisting of a fourteen roomed house, with coach-house and stabling, have alone made life supportable. Without such visions of bliss, life to me would be a howling wilderness, a desert waste. Before that puppy, Mr. Egerton, came here, Mr. Campbell, you certainly did in some measure favour my pretensions. Give me your daughter, sir, and leave her one half of your property, real and personal, Oakwood to be taken as a part at a fair valuation, the whole, if you insist on it, to be settled on myself for life, with remainder to first and every other son in succession in tail male, charged with a reasonable jointure to Bertha, and twenty thousand,

—yes, say twenty thousand,—for younger children.”

(“Oh, ho! that is your game, is it?” thought Mr. Campbell. “Why, the man must be a downright fool to suppose he can take me in with such a shallow trick as that!”).

“The honor you propose myself and daughter, Mr. Walker, is so great, and at the same time so utterly unexpected, that I am really at a loss to find words adequate to express my gratitude. Now, sir,” he continued, fiercely, “let me ask you one question. What have you ever observed in me, that induces you to believe me fool enough to be taken in by such a flimsy cock-and-bull story as that which you have just told me about my title to Oakwood? Go, sir, go! You only leave me in doubt as to one point, and that is whether you are most fool or knave. To say, too, that I encouraged your pretensions! It is a confounded lie; I never dreamt of such a thing. Go, sir, go at once! Make out your bill to-morrow, and send me whatever deeds and papers of mine are at present in your keeping.

Any communication you may have to make respecting them, you may address to Mr. Patterson."

Mr. Campbell had his hand on the bell. Mr. Walker saw that an ejection was contemplated without the intervention of Richard Roe or John Doe, but by the aid alone of Thomas Smith, the tall footman, who had officiated on a former similar occasion.

"Stop, Mr. Campbell, one moment!" he exclaimed hastily. "Pray stop. I swear to you that what I have told you is correct. I will use any form of oath you like, but as sure as I stand here, I can prove that you have not a shadow of a legal right to the estates you now possess. If you will believe me, you may still retain them by giving me your daughter, and thus making it my interest to be silent. But if you do not, I swear most solemnly that I will make you repent it. I will give the necessary proofs to those who can eject you, and the evidence is so clear, that you will not even find it worth your while to attempt to fight the case."

"Upon my word, you are without any exception, the most impudent rascal I ever met with in the whole of my life. Now take yourself off this instant, and never let me set eyes on your face again."

Mr. Walker remembered Thomas's rather offensive giggle on the occasion of ejection No. 1, and instantly beat a retreat. As he reached the door he turned round to Mr. Campbell, and said in a menacing tone,

"I will make you repent this, one day, and that ere long. By G—d, I will."

Mr. Walker shut the door, and Mr. Campbell laughed, but the laugh sounded rather hollow. It was a different sort of laugh to some others which its object had excited on previous occasions.

"What a fool the man must be," he said to himself. "My title to Oakwood! That is rather too absurd! And yet he must have known that I should take my business from him. It is curious that he should be willing to throw away a couple of hundred a year so lightly!

He never can have been fool enough to think I should really give him Bertha for an empty threat! And such an errant scoundrel too! He positively swore that he could and would ruin me! Neither his manner nor his words seemed to me quite like a piece of mere bullying bravado, and if he had the opportunity, he is quite rascal enough to ruin me, out of pure spite,—to make me a beggar, like Egerton!”

Hulloa, Mr. Campbell! Why do you pause in that soliloquy of yours, and look as if a new light had broken in upon your brain?

“Gracious God!” he exclaimed, after a short interval. “Can it be retribution! I have ruined him,—I have gloried in his ruin,—though more for his father’s sake than his own. A retribution! Pooh, pooh, a retribution for what? I had a right to act as I did. Besides I did nothing. I merely abstained from helping him, where I could not have helped him without breaking my word. I should have been a fool had I done otherwise.”

Somehow or other Mr. Walker’s threats gained

considerably in importance as soon as they had become associated with this idea of retribution. In spite of all pooh-poohing, this most unpleasant aspect of the case would keep intruding itself upon his mind, and he began to feel exceedingly uncomfortable.

"I think I can trust Patterson," he said to himself at last, "and I will just ask him to run down here for a day, and then he can look at the title deeds, and tell me if there is a possibility of that rascal's threats having any serious meaning. And yet it is almost too absurd; I hardly like to mention the subject."

Bertha went to drink tea that evening with Miss Palmer, an elderly maiden lady residing at Stonecombe. Mary had suggested her doing so, in the hopes that it might serve to distract her sister's thoughts from her own unhappiness, and Bertha had at last yielded an unwilling consent. Miss Palmer was more than usually communicative on this occasion, and it was not till Bertha urged that she did not like to keep the carriage waiting any longer, that her kind hostess con-

sented to let her depart. This made it so late when she reached home, that Mary had already gone to bed, and Bertha accordingly retired at once to her own apartment.

She had hardly removed her dress and seated herself at the toilet table, when Mary entered the room in a similar dishabille.

"I have got something for you, Bertha," she said, holding her hands behind her, "what will you give me for it?"

"A kiss, Mary, if you like; but pray give it me at once, I can guess what it is."

"That is a curious postage," said Mary, placing a letter in Bertha's hands, and kissing her at the same time. "I think I should have teased you a little longer, if I had not been so very anxious to know whether it contains anything that I may hear. The sight of it has kept me in a most painful state of anxiety all the evening, and you will please to recollect that I tell you long pieces—ever so long—out of Herbert's letters, all except very particular little bits here and there, so it will be only fair if you

—but, dear me, Bertha! what is the matter? no new misfortune I hope.”

Bertha had not had much colour since Eger-ton’s departure, but such a deathlike pallor overspread her face while reading the letter, that Mary was convinced that its contents were of a very painful nature.

Bertha continued reading, and appeared not to hear Mary’s question. At last she pressed both her hands to her forehead, and seemed quite lost in thought.

“Bertha, dear Bertha! do tell me what is the matter! Is he ill?”

“No, dear,” replied Bertha calmly, “but he has lost all his little fortune by the failure of Sir James Peter and Company.”

“But where are you going, Bertha?” said Mary, who was not a little alarmed at Bertha’s excessive paleness, and almost unnatural composure.

“I must speak to my father directly, Mary.”

“But he is very likely in bed by this time,

Bertha, and surely you will not go to him in that costume!"

"Whether he is in bed or not, Mary, I must see him this night, and that instantly. I cannot sleep till I have settled this dreadful doubt," she muttered to herself, "and in such a case, one dress is as good as another."

"But stay, Bertha, do stay one instant!" said Mary, laying her hand on her sister's arm, and trying to detain her. "Do tell me why you are in such a hurry to see papa. He cannot help it, you know."

"Do not detain me now, Mary," said Bertha, gently releasing herself. "I cannot tell you all at present; I might wrong my father. I must see him directly, dear, but you had better go to bed, and not wait for me."

"As if I could sleep, Bertha, while you are in such a state as this! You will be ill, perhaps, and want me to help you. I shall wait till you come back."

Bertha left the room.

Mr. Campbell was sitting in his study. The door opened noiselessly, and in walked a tall figure clad in white, and ashy pale. Had he been superstitious, he might have taken it for his wife's ghost, so strongly did Bertha remind him of her.

"Father," said Bertha, "I have something to say to you."

The voice was Bertha's, and yet not Bertha's, —so clear, so cold. It was evident she came as no suppliant this time, rather indeed as an avenging spirit.

Mr. Campbell's conscience smote him. For the first time in his life he trembled in the presence of his child.

"Bertha! Bertha," he exclaimed, "What is the meaning of this? You should have been in bed and asleep long ago."

"Whether I sleep this night, father, must depend on the answers you give to the questions I am going to put to you."

"Bertha, Bertha!" he gasped out faintly. But he could say no more. He felt the relations

between them were reversed. It was *she* who had to command and *he* to obey; and like an equivocating school boy, he began to think of subterfuges, but his presence of mind quite deserted him, and he could find none.

"You know that I received a letter from Mr. Egerton on Tuesday morning, and therefore that I must have been acquainted with his address. Did you not?"

"I did," he answered, averting his eyes from hers. He could not bear that stern glance which seemed to read his innermost soul.

"You received a letter from Mr. Patterson that evening, informing you that Mr. Egerton's fortune depended on his knowing his address immediately; did you not?"

"I did, I did," said the old man covering his face with his hands.

"And you wrote to Mr. Patterson that you did not know Mr. Egerton's address?"

"I did," he groaned out once more, "I cannot deny it."

"Then father, you were guilty of a sin, a

heinous sin in the eyes of both God and man. You stabbed your enemy in the dark. It was a cruel cowardly act."

"But Bertha," he exclaimed, "I—"

"Do not interrupt me, father. Nothing could have justified that act, even had you committed it against any other man. But who was it whom you have thus ruined in cold blood? Who was it, I ask? You have a daughter Mary whom you love. She has plighted her faith to your nephew, Herbert, whom you love also. Herbert lay on the bed of sickness many a long week last summer. Who was it that watched by that bedside with almost a mother's care and a mother's anxiety? Who was it that sacrificed his career at the University to soothe the irritability, to alleviate the suffering of him who is so dear to us all? Whose hand was ever ready with the draught to cool his fevered lips? Who was it that read to him, to help him pass the long, long hours, and never wearied in his kindness?"

"Spare me, Bertha, spare me."

"You have not spared *him*," she continued. "Who was it, to whom but six short weeks ago, you promised my hand and half your wealth, because you knew he was a true, loving, noble man, a man whom you respected, whom you could not but respect, whom you respect at this moment? I will tell you who it was. It was Henry Egerton. It was he to whom, with your full consent, I have vowed to be a true and loving wife, and with God's aid I will keep that vow. This was the man, father, whom you have selected as the victim of your resentment against the dead!"

"Spare me, Bertha! Pray forgive me! I—"

"Pray to God, father, to forgive you. I feel that I cannot do so yet, and I will not be guilty of an untruth at this our last meeting."

"Our last meeting! Gracious Heavens! What do you mean?"

"I mean that after this night we shall meet no more on earth. By this last act of yours, you have wounded me where I least can bear it. You have yourself dissolved the ties between us,

and that deliberately. A few days ago you spoke of renouncing me, father. By this last act, you have carried out that threat. For I will no longer remain under a parent's roof, when I can no longer feel a child's respect, nor offer a child's obedience. Oh God, that ever I should have to speak such words!"

Almost before he was aware of it, she glided out of the room, with the same noiseless, ghost-like step as that with which she had entered it; and when in the deep silence of the night, he heard her shut her chamber door, it seemed to him like the knell of all peace on earth. There hung the little picture! There hung, still, the little yellow canvass by the fireside! He read the words upon it once more. 'Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you.' He pondered over them,— but, alas, it was too late. Ah, Mr. Campbell! Simple as that little kettle holder looked in its yellow fringe, it would have been better for you if you had given its teachings a little more consideration while it was yet time!

“Retribution!” he muttered to himself.
“Retribution!”

“Leave me, dear Mary, for to-night,” said Bertha, as she withdrew to her room. “I wish to be alone, love. I have suffered much,—and must suffer more. I have much to forgive, Mary, and cannot find forgiveness in my own heart. I must pray that God will give me grace, and that I may learn to regard the sins of others in a more Christian spirit?”

Bertha’s eyes were dry, but Mary’s filled with tears as she kissed her sister, and left her to the solitude of her chamber.

As soon as she had closed the door, Bertha knelt down by her bedside, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

The next morning Bertha did not appear at the breakfast table, and Mary undertook the office of tea-maker. Mr. Campbell glanced at the vacant chair, and then at Mary, but he said nothing. She understood the meaning of the look, however, and said in a low voice:

"Bertha has gone to the vicarage. She went at seven o'clock this morning."

He made no comment. He read, or tried to read the "Times," but the letters danced before his eyes and he could make nothing of it.

"Retribution," he repeated to himself as soon as Mary had left him. "Retribution; and Walker's threat too—all retribution. I will write to Patterson to-day."

Mr. Campbell wrote as he intended, and the next evening Mr. Patterson arrived. He gave the title a general examination, and came to the conclusion that it was perfectly sound, and that Walker's object was merely to extort money, for keeping a secret which did not exist. He observed that it would be impolitic to take counsel's opinion, as such a step might have the effect of damaging the title rather than strengthening it. He added that there was scarcely a title in the kingdom in which a clever conveyancer could not pick some little hole or other, but that he saw no grounds for apprehension in the present instance.

As soon as Mr. Campbell's mind had been re-

lieved by the above opinion from all anxiety respecting his property, and he ceased to regard Mr. Walker's threat as the commencement of a retribution, he availed himself of the reaction in his mind to discard that idea altogether. He now regarded Bertha's reproaches and subsequent flight as so many proofs of the rebellious spirit with which Egerton had inspired her, and as acts of insubordination against his authority, which he had done nothing to merit. The bitterness of his resentment was not a little increased by the recollection of the humiliating position in which he had appeared during that final interview, and his heart was hardened against her even more than before.

And what became of Bertha? After a sleepless night, she had risen at six o'clock, packed up a few necessary articles in a carpet bag, and walked to the Vicarage with it herself. She would not avail herself of the assistance of any of the servants, for although it would have been willingly rendered, she did not wish to compromise them with her father.

Herbert was taking a little turn in the garden

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before breakfast. Great indeed was his astonishment when he saw his cousin thus heavily laden, enter the gate, and walk towards the house. He hurried to meet her, and offered to relieve her of her burthen.

"Why, dear Bertha," he exclaimed, "what can have happened? And how pale you look."

"Is my uncle up yet?" she replied, evading his question. "I should like to speak to him as soon as possible."

"He is not up yet, I believe; at least he was not five minutes ago, but he will be very soon. Has anything happened at the Hall?"

"You will know all soon, Herbert. But I wish to see my uncle before I tell you the sad, sad story which has brought me here. I have left my father's house, Herbert, never to return to it."

"Good Heavens, Bertha! You surely cannot mean what you say?" He looked at her very anxiously, for in the first instant he began to fear, lest her late distress had affected her reason.

"I am not mad, Herbert," she said with a faint smile, "though I can hardly wonder at your evident alarm. I have had enough to drive me mad though, and could hardly have regretted any calamity that would have spared me the torture of the last twelve hours. But you will know all before long."

"I will go to my father directly," he said, as they entered the house; "but pray tell me first, is Mary well and happy, or is she involved in this terrible quarrel?"

"Except her cough, Herbert, she is quite well; and this distressing family dissension does not extend to her. Whether she can be happy while I am as you see me, I leave you to judge."

Herbert hurried off, and in a few minutes afterwards returned to the breakfast room, accompanied by his father.

"Why, Bertha," exclaimed her uncle, "what is all this? Surely Herbert must have misunderstood you. He tells me you have said that you had left your father's house never to return to it."

Bertha shook her head mournfully. "Too true," she said, "too true." Then turning to Herbert she said, "I think, dear Herbert, that I ought not to speak ill of my father to more persons than I can help, and least of all perhaps to you, as Mary is so soon to become your wife. I must, however, justify myself to my uncle, the kind tutor to whom I owe so much, and he will tell you afterwards whether I am acting wrongly in this sad step that I am taking."

Herbert left the room.

"My dear Bertha," said the Vicar, "you know we all love you dearly. But you must not expect from me any very warm approbation of your conduct in the present instance. I cannot say that I think my brother was right in breaking off your engagement with Egerton; on the contrary, I think he was wrong. But still in my opinion, that is hardly enough to justify a child in acting immediately in open opposition to her father's direct commands, and still less in leaving her home. Before, therefore, you tell me anything of what has passed between your-

self and your father, let me ask you candidly, would it not be the best plan for me to walk up to the Hall after breakfast, tell him you are conscious of having acted too precipitately, and, in short, bring about a reconciliation in the best way I can? You shall find a warm advocate in me I promise you."

"I feel your kindness, uncle, and wish I could avail myself of it; but when you know all, you will agree with me that any such attempt would be out of place. When my father commanded me to give up Mr. Egerton, I refused to do so, because I considered that our engagement had given him rights which my father could not annul at pleasure. I felt that my father's demand was unreasonable, that it was dictated by motives of personal resentment to the late Sir Roderick; and that it was unjust, both to Henry and myself, as our own happiness was left quite out of the question, and we were treated as things and not as persons. My father called on me to break a promise solemnly given, and in doing so to sacrifice my own happiness and an attach-

ment in which I glory, to the gratification of a feeling on his part, which, if not without some excuse, is certainly one that you cannot approve. But though I refused to recall my promise, I did not contemplate leaving the protection of my father's roof immediately, but hoped in time to soften his resentment against Henry, and to obtain eventually his sanction to our union. I would have waited long, uncle, indeed I would, had he not himself destroyed all prospect of a reconciliation. Now tell me uncle, do you really think that my duty to my father required me to break my promise to Henry, made as it was with his consent, when my father's avowed motives for demanding such a sacrifice were based on feelings, which I knew to be wrong?"

"Well, Bertha, as you ask me, I must say I can hardly blame you thus far. But why this precipitation? Why did you not leave him time to re-consider the question, after his first feelings of resentment had cooled down? He might perhaps in time be more willing to see the case in another light."

"No," said Bertha sadly, "there is no hope of that now. His resentment has carried him so far as wilfully and deliberately to ruin the man to whom he had promised his daughter's hand, and who had done nothing to forfeit his claim to the fulfilment of that promise."

"Deliberately ruin him! Why, Bertha, what can you mean?"

"Read that letter, uncle, and you will then know why I have left my home with the determination never to return to it."

Mr. Edward Campbell took Egerton's letter, and read it through. Bertha watched his countenance, and marked the pain which every word inflicted on his heart.

"Oh, John, John! Had any other than your own daughter told me this, I would have said it was a calumny. But perhaps, Bertha, there is some mistake after all. Perhaps he forgot that he could learn Egerton's address. There is yet hope, my girl! Let us—"

"None," she answered. "I have asked him if it were so, and he has confessed all. It was

a deliberate act—as cruel as it was deliberate. And now tell me, truly, uncle, can you in your heart condemn me for following the dictates of my own conscience, and placing my destiny in the hands of my affianced husband, rather than yield a cold, heartless obedience to a father who has so grievously wronged him?”

The Vicar was silent. He was evidently seeking for some extenuating plea for his erring brother—but he could find none.

“I cannot blame you, Bertha,” he said at last. “I think your father’s last act has morally released you from your obedience. And what do you propose to do?”

“I mean to join Henry this very day.”

“But my dear girl, you cannot do that. It would not be—”

“Excuse me for interrupting you, uncle,” said Bertha, blushing, “but I know what you are going to say. I have thought of all that, and have hit upon a plan, which seems to me quite unobjectionable. I mean to go direct to my old nurse, Mrs. Parker. I have many kind

friends in London, the Hortons, or the Walsinghams, for instance; but though I am sure they would willingly take me in, I think it might embarrass them to receive me under existing circumstances, as it would probably involve them in a quarrel with papa. Besides this, I should be obliged to explain to them my motives for such an unusual step, and I do not wish my father's conduct to be known to more persons than I can help. I have, therefore, decided for Mrs. Parker, as I need not tell her anything more than I feel inclined. I am sure she will contrive to give me shelter for a day or two, and in the mean time I can talk over with Henry what will be the best course for us to pursue."

"But you are so ignorant of the world, Bertha, I do not like your going alone."

"Perhaps I am not quite so helpless as you seem to think; and at any rate it is only right that I should learn a little independence, for, as the wife of a poor man, I shall soon want it."

"Upon my word, Bertha, your father little

knows what he is losing, or he would sooner have cut off his right hand than commit that most cruel act."

The tears started to Bertha's eyes.

"Do not let us talk of the past, uncle; it unnerves me quite, and I want all my strength."

"You do indeed, my poor girl—you do indeed."

The Vicar was silent for a few moments. He was reflecting with himself, whether he should propose that Herbert should accompany his niece. He felt that his brother would probably resent such a step, and that it was desirable to keep Herbert out of the quarrel if possible. But still, he could not forget that his brother was in the wrong and Bertha in the right, and it seemed like an act of cowardice not to render all the assistance in his power out of fear for the ulterior consequences.

"Herbert shall go with you," he said at length.

"Of course, my dear uncle, I shall be very grateful for Herbert's escort, but I fear lest it

may involve yourself and Herbert in this sad quarrel."

"We must leave the consequences to take care of themselves, Bertha. In such a case as this, Herbert will feel that he is only performing a duty, and will not shrink from it."



CHAPTER V.

EGERTON was sitting alone in his lodgings in London. His thoughts were none of the most cheering. Not quite a week had elapsed since he had received Mr. Weatherley's letter informing him that the place Lord Windworth had promised him was destined for some more prosperous aspirant, and three days after that unwelcome communication, Sir James Peter was in the Gazette and Egerton a beggar.

All his little property, with the exception of an odd £300, had been placed in the hands of that highly respectable firm, and he had risen that

morning with the painful conviction that the cares and troubles of life had commenced for him in good earnest.

“Well,” said he to himself, “there is many a poor devil in this metropolis far worse off than I am. I have health, and strength, and money enough in my pocket to pay my way for a year at least, and enable me to look about me. Besides that, I have the will to work, and it will be hard indeed, if with the education I have enjoyed, I cannot pick up a respectable livelihood somehow. All work is honourable, from that of a Secretary of State to that of sweeping the streets, and I am not the man to shirk. But there is poor Bertha! I fear it will be a long time before I can call her mine. I should not mind waiting so much, if I only knew she were happy under her father’s roof. But I am much afraid—and then there is that terrible riddle to be cleared up. No, he may be proud and obstinate, but I never can believe his resentment would carry him so far as to ruin me in cold blood. I wrong the old man by the mere suspicion. He must have forgotten



that Bertha knew my address. How I long for her next letter! It will clear up this most incomprehensible mystery."

There was a knock at the street door, and immediately afterwards steps were heard on the stairs.

"What, Herbert!" exclaimed Egerton, joyfully, as the door opened, and his friend appeared. "You are a capital fellow to come so soon after my little misfortunes!"

"Little!" replied Herbert. "Well, you do right to take them lightly."

"I confess I felt very much inclined to ask you to run up for a day or two, that I might have somebody to talk over my plans with, but I thought it might be inconvenient, perhaps, and so—"

"What! Inconvenient to come to you, Egerton, at such a time! I had intended, it is true, to have waited till to-morrow, but something occurred to hasten my journey."

"Indeed!" said Egerton. "What was it?"

"I had to escort a lady to London, who did

not wish to wait, and if you do not mind taking a third person into your confidence, I think you might safely consult her as well as myself. In the multitude of counsellors you know there is wisdom."

"God bless me, Herbert! You do not mean to say that Bertha—"

"I mean to say that she is standing outside that door, waiting to know if you will admit her."

Egerton darted to the door, and Bertha was in his arms. Herbert's presence was forgotten for the moment. Painful as were the circumstances that had occasioned the meeting, it was still a happy one. The reaction after the last few terrible days, was more than Bertha could bear with equanimity, but the tears she shed were those of joy. She looked up tenderly into his eyes, and read there such deep affection as to make her feel in her inmost heart, that though she had lost the home of her childhood, she had gained another, which if not so splendid as the first, would ever prove most rich in the love that alone lends home its charms.

Had Bertha entertained the slightest doubt respecting the propriety of the step she was taking in visiting her betrothed, the unalloyed joy with which he welcomed her, would have completely set her mind at ease as to the light in which it was regarded by him whose opinion she most valued. But the truth must be confessed,—she had entertained no such doubts. The events of the preceding week had, to a certain extent, reversed their relative positions. Now that he was a ruined man, and had neither the present means nor the future prospect of being able to support her, it was impossible for him either to urge their marriage, or even to expect that the engagement should be regarded as still in force. Bertha, on the other hand, was extremely anxious to compensate him for the great wrong he had sustained at her father's hand, to the extent of her little fortune. She felt, therefore, that under existing circumstances, the initiative had been thrust upon herself, and that anything like an

ill-timed prudery would have been the reverse of the truest delicacy.

"I shall take a constitutional of a quarter of an hour," said Herbert, "and shall return at the end of that time, in the expectation of finding you young people in a sober state of mind. An old bachelor like myself is not wanted just at first, but perhaps when you come to talk of plans, I may be allowed to join in your counsels."

Herbert left them, and Bertha then told Eger-ton that her father had purposely withheld the knowledge of his address from Mr. Patterson, and that as soon as she had ascertained that fact from his own lips, she felt that she could no longer remain under the same roof with him.

"We will not talk about it any more, dear Henry," she said, "it is too dreadful. But I was obliged to tell you," she continued, colouring as she spoke, "lest you might think me over bold in thus following you to London. It was

very kind of Herbert to escort me; but I had made up my mind to come alone if he had not done so. You have lost £5000, have you not?"

"Yes, dearest. . That was the sum at Sir James Peter's, and, as I hear, the creditors are not likely to get a shilling in the pound, perhaps not even sixpence."

"Well then, I have £3000, you know, and that I shall make over to you at once."

"Dearest Bertha," said Egerton, much touched, "that is just like you, love, but we cannot live on the interest of £3000, and at present I have no income from any source whatever, to make up the deficiency."

"I did not mean that *we* should live on it, Henry, I meant that *you* should; at any rate, for the present."

"And what will you do?" said Egerton in astonishment.

"I have settled a capital plan for both of us," she answered. "I say, *settled*, because it is only fair to let you know beforehand, that I

mean to have my own way a little sometimes, and consider this to be an excellent opportunity for beginning. So you must be a good Henry, and obey at once without making any difficulties."

"And may I ask what your ladyship's plan is?" said Egerton laughing.

"You can manage to exist upon the interest of the £3000, though not very comfortably. If you find it impossible, you can take a little of the capital. In the meantime you can try to get a place, or study for the law, or write, or do something else to earn a better income, and when you have succeeded, which is sure to be soon, with one as clever as you are—why then, if you have not changed your mind, Henry, we will share it together."

"And what are you to do, Bertha, all this time? You cannot live upon air."

"Oh, that is very easily managed. I intend to take a place as a governess. Thanks to my dear uncle, I feel quite capable of undertaking such duties, and if, as I hope, I get a good salary,

I shall be able to save something against the happy time, when—when—”

“When I give you the opportunity of ruling the roast in good style, dearest,” said Egerton, kissing her.

“Exactly so. And now you see I have kept my word, and settled everything most admirably.”

“By way of establishing my authority, Bertha, I must begin at once with a little opposition. You cannot, surely, think, love, I should let you give me your money before you give me yourself!”

“Why not?” said Bertha, hastily. “It is no more than just. My father has robbed you of £5000. It is a hard word to use, Henry, but it is the only one that describes his act. I only wish I could replace the whole, but, unfortunately, my legacy from my grandfather is all I possess. I consider you have a perfect moral right to this money, as I am the unhappy cause of your having lost yours. Do pray take it, Henry. You will make me so happy if you will. Besides it all comes to the same thing in the end, as we

hope, before long to have everything in common between us."

"God bless you for the best woman He ever made!" exclaimed Egerton, fervently. "I had vaguely believed there were some angel spirits in woman's form, among us poor mortals here on earth, but I never knew it till now. But your kindness, dearest, in this respect is not necessary. I have somewhere about £300 of my own left, and can manage to get on with this till I have found the means of supporting us both. In the mean time you can live on the interest of your money, Bertha. It will not be much, but I dare say you can board for a small sum, in a respectable family, and then it will not be necessary for you to plague yourself with teaching half a dozen unruly children how to behave."

"Time is up," said Herbert, as he entered the room. "I have walked four times to the end of the street and back again, and think that an ample allowance for a first greeting. And what does Egerton say to your scheme, Bertha? Is he a good, obedient boy?"

"No," she replied. "He is very refractory."

"I told you so, Bertha. I know the gentleman of old, and was sure he would not agree. And what does he propose instead?"

"He does not seem to estimate my qualities as a governess, very highly, and supposes," said Bertha, "that the children under my care would all be unruly; but he has yet to learn my qualifications for governing. He wants me to mope away my days as a boarder in a respectable family, while he is wearing himself out to keep both of us."

"I do not see why you should not be a governess, Bertha and I do not believe that Egerton does either. But I think I have a still better plan to propose than any that has occurred to you. You have £3000 Bertha, and just as we left Stonecombe, my father called me aside, and said he hoped that you and Egerton would allow him to add £2000, and thus make up with Bertha's money, the whole sum lost. Don't interrupt me, Egerton. Let me make my speech

first, and then you shall speak, if you have any sensible objections to make, which I don't believe. My father has been extremely pained by the late occurrence, which we need not talk about any more. He positively cried about it as soon as Bertha was out of the room, and I have not seen him so cut up for a long time. He said that he should know no peace if you refused to accept his offer, which he regarded as a mere act of justice, and not as a present; and lest you should be in any immediate embarrassment, he desired me to hand you this little cheque."

With these words Herbert placed a cheque for £50 upon the table.

For the first moment neither Egerton nor Bertha could speak.

"Tell your father, Herbert," said Egerton, at length, in a voice trembling with emotion, "tell your father that I shall never forget his noble generosity as long as I live. I have no conceivable claim upon him, and the way in which he has endeavoured to make his most kind offer appear like a compensation for my loss, is another

proof of the kindness of his heart. I cannot, however, rob him in this manner, and I assure you I expect to be able to fight my way without this assistance. Of course I cannot speak for Bertha in this matter, but I think she will see it in the same light as I do."

"Oh, Herbert," said Bertha, taking his hand, "thank my uncle—I—I wish I could say all I feel—I—"

The tears filled her eyes, and she could say no more.

"I can only repeat," said Herbert, "that I hope you will both agree to take it. My father has quite enough, and can spare this sum without inconvenience. He has no one to provide for but myself, and, as you both know, I shall not want it. I must, therefore, second my father's request that you will not feel any scruples about taking it."

"Thank you, thank you, Herbert. If we cannot get on without it I will gratefully accept your and my uncle's kindness, but we will try first to do without it. Tell him that whether

we accept it or no, his generous offer has given me one of the happiest moments I have ever known."

"And now," said Herbert, "I must finish my speech. You do not know the whole of my plan yet. I am aware it has a very dark side, but still there can be no harm in making the suggestion. Suppose you two people go to church and get married as soon as Doctors Commons will allow you. You can remain in London, say for a year, and in this time perhaps Egerton can get a place or literary occupation, or some other means of living. If you take a very small house in the suburbs, and are economical, you need not spend more than a few hundreds. Well then, at the end of this time Egerton sees his way, or he does not. In the former case you stay here, in the latter you will have at least £2,500, or as I hope £2,000 more, and can emigrate. Why even £2,000 is a splendid capital to emigrate with, and with double that sum you may hope to be tolerably comfortable in a very short time."

Bertha was silent, but her face looked so bright, that there was no great difficulty in seeing what she thought of Herbert's proposition.

"We should then be living entirely on Bertha's little fortune," said Egerton doubtfully.

"Have you both made up your minds to take each other for better or worse?"

"I don't think there is much doubt about that," said Egerton.

"Then I think the less we say about Bertha's and Egerton's, as if your interests were divided, the better."

"But then," said Egerton, "if we should be obliged to emigrate, and that does not seem so very improbable, I doubt if Bertha has the bodily strength for such a hard life. Think of what her life at Oakwood has been, and then picture her to yourself, Herbert, milking a cow, making cheeses, churning butter, or trundling a mop."

"As for that, I am much stronger than you think. I once walked to Stony Coombe and

back, and I flatter myself that after I have had a little practice, all the other colonists in the neighbourhood will be ruined, for nobody will buy butter or cheese except at the Egerton farm. In fact, I begin to feel an innate genius for such things, and believe I should prefer it to governing with the six unruly children."

"The first part of your proposition is very tempting, Herbert. Now seriously, what do you say to it, Bertha?"

Bertha coloured slightly. "Herbert has called himself an old bachelor," she said smiling, "and in age you know there is wisdom."

"Then be it so with all my heart," said Egerton joyously. He kissed Bertha as he spoke, and then whispered in her ear, "You see, dearest, I shall owe everything to you after all; my bread as well as the butter and cheese on Egerton's farm."

"By Jove," said Herbert, "I'll take a cab to Doctor's Commons at once."

Two days after the above conversation a wed-

ding party, consisting of four persons, made their appearance at a suburban church, and the ceremony was duly performed. Mrs. Parker, Bertha's old nurse, was the only female present besides the bride, who was given away by Herbert Campbell. There was no grand breakfast on the occasion, nor any champagne drunk. The bride and bridegroom started the same afternoon for the Isle of Wight, where they spent ten days, and then returned to furnished lodgings in Pentonville—unfashionable but cheap.

CHAPTER VI.

BERTHA had left her home on Friday. The following morning Mary received a few hasty lines informing her of the plan that had been suggested by Herbert, and their intention of adopting it. Bertha added, that though it would be very painful to her to leave England and all her old friends, yet there would also be a pleasure in the very greatness of the sacrifice she would be making to her husband. She wished for no happier lot than to follow him through the world wherever his destiny might call him, and she almost felt, that in a distant land and among strangers, they

would be more to each other, if indeed that were possible, than were they to remain in England.

Mary read the letter with a melancholy sort of pleasure. She could not help sympathizing strongly with Bertha's happiness, in the prospect of her immediate union with the man she loved, but she felt no less strongly that that union would involve a lasting separation from herself. The change too for poor Bertha would be so great! After having enjoyed all the luxuries of wealth, to be exposed to the hardships of a settler's life, would be a severe trial for her; and nothing but Mary's confidence in Egerton's affection for her sister, could have reconciled her to so sad a prospect. But after all a happier fate might still be in store for them. Perhaps Egerton might succeed in obtaining some situation in London, and then her father be reconciled in time, and the happy old family circle meet once more at Oakwood and forget the past. Bright visions, could they only be realized.

Since breakfast time, on the morning of

Bertha's flight, Mr. Campbell had made no further allusion to her absence, but his silence had been forced, and with all his assumed coldness, he could not stifle the curiosity he felt respecting her subsequent movements. A little before the end of dinner on the succeeding day, he determined to satisfy it even at the expense of his pride, and addressed Mary as follows:

"I think you had a letter from Bertha this morning. May I ask its contents?"

Mary hesitated.

"Do you know where she is, and what she intends doing?" he continued sharply.

"Yes, papa, I do. She has gone to London, and is at present at Mrs. Parker's."

"Mrs. Parker! And pray who is Mrs. Parker?"

"Our old nurse, papa."

"Oh, ha, I recollect. A very fitting companion indeed for my daughter to take up her abode with! And how does this self-willed young lady intend to live? On Mrs. Parker's charity?"

"No, papa. She is going—"

"Well, Mary?"

"She is going to marry Mr. Egerton on Monday."

"Marry Egerton! Why he is a beggar! he has not got enough to keep himself, much less a wife. And then to rush up to London, quite alone, and throw herself in a man's arms in that way! Why she must have lost all sense of propriety."

"She did not go alone, papa."

"Why, who went with her?"

"Herbert, papa."

"Herbert!" exclaimed Mr. Campbell, violently. "Herbert went with her! Upon my word, your knight errant seems to have a very nice sense of what is due to me! So Herbert actually aided her in running away from her father's house! I shall have a word to say to Master Herbert about that. He will find it rather difficult to clear himself with me, I can tell him."

"But papa," said Mary imploringly, "Her-

bert went with my uncle's knowledge and approbation."

"Worse and worse!" said Mr. Campbell, angrily. "Why your uncle must be mad, to encourage Bertha in her rebellious conduct! I couldn't have believed it possible. The world must be coming to a pretty pass, when a father, and a clergyman too, can lend his sanction to such an act of disobedience. I must see about that directly."

Mr. Campbell left the room.

"It really would seem," he said to himself, as he sat down to his writing table, "it really would seem as if they were all in a conspiracy against me! Fool that I was, to be so weak when Bertha came to me that night in such an unseemly manner! She has told Edward of her triumph, and so he begins to think he will find me tamed down, and willing to let myself be insulted by any one who has the courage to try the experiment. It never answers in these cases to yield one tittle. Edward shall soon be made aware of his mistake. Unless he can give me a

very satisfactory explanation, I know what my course will be. I shall have to make some more people unhappy, yet, I am afraid. Poor Mary! I wish I could avoid it, but if people will act as if they had lost their senses, they must take the consequences. I wash my hands of all responsibility."

Mr. Campbell wrote a short note to his brother and instantly despatched it to the Vicarage.

The Vicar had just sat down to finish his sermon for the next day, when the letter was placed in his hands. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR EDWARD,

"Mary has just told me something which I find it difficult to believe, as it implicates both yourself and Herbert in a matter in which your own good sense, and the respect you owe to myself, ought to have kept you from interfering. She has informed me, that after Bertha left her home in that improper manner yesterday morning, so far from endeavouring to lead her back

to a sense of her duty, you allowed Herbert to accompany her on her journey to London, and thus lent your sanction to her most unjustifiable disobedience. Hoping that this statement is incorrect, and awaiting your explanations,

“I remain, dear Edward,

“Your affectionate brother,

“JOHN CAMPBELL.”

To this letter Mr. Edward Campbell returned the following answer:—

“MY DEAR JOHN,

“Mary’s statement is substantially correct. I certainly did ask Herbert to accompany Bertha to London, and am willing to take the whole responsibility of that act on my own shoulders. At the same time, I must add that I endeavoured in the first instance to persuade her to return to her home, and that it was only after she had confided to me all her reasons for leaving it, that Herbert and myself offered her that protection,

which, as her nearest relatives, we could not have refused her under the circumstances. I shall be happy to explain my views on this subject more at length, when I see you to-morrow after church. I would call on you this evening had I the time, but I have still got a good deal of my sermon to write.

“I remain, dear John,

“Your affectionate brother,

“EDWARD CAMPBELL.”

The next morning when Mr. Campbell entered the reading desk, it did not escape him that his brother's pew was empty. The weather was fine, and Mr. Campbell had always been a regular attendant at church, when not prevented by ill health, so that his absence was not to be accounted for on any very satisfactory grounds. Every time the door opened, and some late comer crept stealthily to his place, the Vicar's eye wandered towards the aisle, but alas! it did not find what it sought. Once or twice as he proceeded with the prayers his voice trembled,

and he felt some difficulty in commanding his feelings, for it seemed as if that vacant seat were the one great fact of that morning service, and must necessarily force itself upon the attention of all present, and proclaim to the whole congregation that a difference of opinion had arisen between their pastor and his only brother. But then again he concentrated his thoughts upon the meaning of the holy words he was reading, and he soon regained his customary composure.

The service was concluded, but he missed the old familiar greeting in the little vestry as the clerk relieved him of his gown. He generally rested between the services, but on this occasion he found it to be impossible. He hurried from the church door, and only exchanging a hasty passing greeting with a few of his parishioners, walked on with a rapid step towards the Hall. Mary knew her uncle too well not to anticipate his visit, and met him near the lodge gate.

"Mary," he said, shaking her warmly by the hand, "your father is not ill I hope? As

neither of you were in church this morning, I feared lest something might have happened."

"Oh uncle," she answered gravely, "I could almost have found it in my heart to wish that illness had kept us from church. But no, it was something worse. Papa is so extremely angry at your having allowed Herbert to accompany Bertha to London, and also about a letter which he received from you yesterday, that he forbade my going to church this morning, and I obeyed him, but it was sorely against my will."

"I was a little afraid of something of the sort," he replied, "and have come on purpose to speak to him on the subject."

"I do not think papa will see you," said Mary, "he seems so very angry this morning, and said so many harsh and bitter things about yourself and Herbert's taking Bertha's part against him, that at last I could bear it no longer, and I left the room."

"Ah, my poor girl! I am afraid yours is not the very happiest life just now, but we must not have two victims in the same family."

Well as Mary was acquainted with her father's character, and the violence of his animosity against all who had once incurred his resentment, the effect which it might have on her own destiny had never occurred to her till now. When, however, she heard her uncle's last remark, the truth flashed upon her at once, and a pain shot through her heart, which, for the moment, almost paralysed her power of utterance. She turned towards him with a look of agony, and answering the thought rather than the words, said:

"Surely, uncle, you do not think he could be so cruel!"

"Cheer up, Mary," he answered encouragingly, "perhaps we are only frightening ourselves with hobgoblins of our own creation. I was only thinking that when your father does take anything into his head, it is sometimes rather difficult to get it out again."

"Had you not better wait till to-morrow, uncle," said Mary anxiously, in whose imagination the impending interview seemed like the

crisis of her fate. "He is feeling so very strongly about Bertha just at present, that his resentment extends to all who are in any way connected with her flight; and I am so much afraid lest angry words should pass between you if you see him in his present mood—words which he will never recall."

" 'Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him,' is no idle precept, Mary; and though my brother is not yet my adversary, I must lose no time lest he should become so. But I will never be his, Mary, never! I can give you so much comfort, at any rate."

"Oh, my dear uncle!" said Mary affectionately, "pray remember how much happiness depends on your perfect reconciliation with my father. All my happiness, uncle, and perhaps a good deal of Herbert's too. Try to make concessions if you can," she continued, coaxingly, "do not say anything to irritate him, oh, pray don't! Do think of Herbert and myself."

"I will say all that I can consistently with

truth and honour, Mary, but more of course I cannot promise."

Mr. Campbell had seen the Vicar's approach from his study window, and sent Thomas to the door to meet him.

"My master has desired me to say, sir," said Thomas, "that he is engaged at present, and cannot see you, but that he will write to you in the course of the afternoon."

The Vicar endeavoured to conceal his discomposure at this unwelcome message, from the eye of the servant, but Mary could read in his looks how deeply he was hurt.

"Pray do not forget us!" she said, in a low voice, and pressing her uncle's hand.

"I will do my best, Mary," he replied as he walked away.

He tried to smile as he spoke, but failed. His heart was too heavy, and he had had no practice in disguising his feelings.

When Mr. Edward Campbell returned from church that afternoon, he found a letter addressed in his brother's handwriting, awaiting

his return. He opened it eagerly, but the first three words that met his eye quite incapacitated him for the moment from proceeding any further.

“My dear sir,” it commenced.

He read thus far, and laid the letter down. He took it up again, but without any better success. Those three words made all that followed indistinct. He wiped his spectacles, but it was of no avail; the moisture was in the eye, and not on the glass. My dear sir! and had it come to this! They had been schoolfellows together and had slept in the same room; fellow students together, and had pulled in the same boat. Their homes had been so near, that even after their marriages had produced a partial separation, three days had rarely elapsed without a meeting. Their children had long loved each other, and were soon to be united, and more than all, they themselves were brothers. And was all this to end in their old age, and were they to address each other with the cold politeness of acquaintances of a month’s standing? Many a

scene of boyhood thronged upon the old man's memory—scenes from the time when his brother was Jack, and he was Ned, and they had played at cricket together in the paddock, at Oakwood. How well he remembered the day when he had saved his brother from punishment by begging his father to let him bear it instead! How well he remembered the cool courage with which his brother had sprung into the water and saved his life while bathing! And now, when both were within a few years of the grave, came those cold words, and ignored those memories as if such things had never been! But the letter must be read. How did it proceed?

“MY DEAR SIR,

“After the very unsatisfactory nature of your reply to my letter of yesterday, I must decline meeting you at present. You frankly acknowledge that you have taken the part of my daughter against myself, and under such exceedingly irritating circumstances I cannot trust my own temper sufficiently to render an inter-

view between us desirable. Should you, however, wish to offer any apology or explanation of your conduct,—conduct, allow me to add, particularly unbecoming in a minister of that religion which teaches us to honour our parents,—I shall be happy to accept the same in writing.

“I remain, dear Sir,

“Yours faithfully,

“JOHN CAMPBELL.”

Perhaps if we were to inquire into the real motive of this letter, we might find it partially explained by the old worldly maxim, that the offensive is often the best defensive. There was a latent consciousness in Mr. Campbell's mind, that unless he took some such step, and at least avoided a personal interview, his brother might feel it his duty to subject him to a similar examination to that which he had already undergone at Bertha's hands.

The Vicar, however, though a very amiable man, was not quite so weak as his brother could have wished, and wrote the following letter in reply:

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“MY DEAR BROTHER,

“I address you in this way because I cannot so easily forget our relationship, nor the long years in which we have lived together as friends as well as brothers. I regret extremely that you are unwilling to see me, as much may be said at a personal interview which it is impossible to express adequately in a letter. With regard to explanations, I must say, my dear brother, that you appear to me to reverse the order in which they should be made. As I mentioned in my former letter, my approbation of Bertha's step was only given after she had made me acquainted with the very peculiar circumstances of her flight. I will only add that when you have explained to me on what grounds you considered yourself justified in allowing Mr. Egerton to be ruined, when a few words from yourself would have saved him, I shall also be ready to explain to you on what grounds I yielded Bertha both shelter and assistance in the hour of her need. The religion of which I am a humble minister teaches us not only to honour

•

our parents, but also to love our enemies, and to do to others as we would have others do to us. Heaven forbid! dear John, that I should ever write such words with any bitterness towards yourself. I know that you have been sorely tempted, and that your feelings have been wounded where, perhaps, they are the most sensitive. But I cannot shut my eyes to the real nature of the act by which you have avenged yourself on the innocent, and can only pray that you may see it in its true light before the grave has closed over you, and rendered penitence too late, and reparation impossible.

“Take these words, dear John, in the spirit in which they are written, and lay them to your heart. Do not let discord part two brothers in their old age, who have loved each other through so many long years, and, as I sincerely hope and trust, may continue to do so till God sees fit to part them.

“Believe me, dear John,

“Your ever affectionate brother,

“EDWARD CAMPBELL.”

When Herbert was giving away the bride that fine Monday morning, and longing for the day on which he was to play a principal part in a similar ceremony, little did he dream of the magnitude of the sacrifice he was making to friendship, and of the dark clouds that were gathering over his own future. What those clouds were, will be seen from the following letter from Mr. Campbell to his brother :

“DEAR SIR,

“I duly received your favour yesterday evening, and feel a good deal surprised at its contents. I certainly thought I had been sufficiently explicit, that what I required was an explanation or an apology, and not a sermon. Your suggestion that I should first explain an act of mine towards a third person, an act, moreover, which does not in any way concern you, is too preposterous to deserve any serious consideration. The readiness with which you have lent an ear to the *ex parte* statement of my daughter against her own father, and have even

thought proper to act upon it, is in itself sufficient to disqualify you for the office of judge between us.

“ Much as I may regret, on my daughter’s account, the necessity of the step I am about to take, my regard for her true welfare obliges me to dissolve the engagement between her and your son, and I have, therefore, to beg you will consider it at an end from this time. His conduct in aiding Miss Campbell to set her own father at defiance, is in my opinion so extremely reprehensible, that I should not feel justified in committing the happiness of my daughter Mary to the keeping of a man of such laxity of principle. I need hardly add that until you are prepared to see the subject from a different point of view to that indicated in your letter, it is desirable that all intercourse between ourselves and families should cease.

“ I remain, dear Sir,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ JOHN CAMPBELL.”

As Mr. Campbell concluded the above letter, he remembered with a sort of grim satisfaction that Bertha's marriage and the act by which he was destroying Herbert's happiness, were, in all probability, going on at the same moment.

"It is only right," said he to himself, "that the punishment should follow quickly upon such an act of defiance to my authority; and if he chooses to usurp a father's rights over Bertha, at least he shall never possess those of a husband over her sister. I will shew the letter to Mary before I send it, as it will be as good a way as any of informing her of my determination. Poor girl! I pity her with all my heart. It is a very painful duty, but I have no choice. A conspiracy like this must be quelled with a strong hand. The consequences must rest with those who have provoked them."

Mr. Campbell rang the bell and sent for Mary. Her heart sank within her when she heard the summons, for she at once divined its meaning. She hurried to her father's study, and when he

saw her pale face and flurried looks, he almost wavered in his resolution. It was, however, but for a moment, and by a strong effort of his will he steeled his heart against all kindlier feelings and determined to perform his duty.

"Mary," he said, with a slight quiver in his voice, "you have always been a dutiful and obedient child."

"Then it is as I feared," she thought, "God help me!"

"Your gentle nature," he continued, "is not one to rebel against a father's authority, because obedience may require a sacrifice."

"I hope not," she answered in a low voice, "but pray, father—"

Mary paused.

"Well, love?"

Mary sank at her father's feet, and leaning her face upon his lap, pressed his hand against her cold cheek now wet with the tears that streamed down it.

In spite of all his firm resolve, Mr. Campbell was moved. He was not demonstrative himself,

nor had he been accustomed to anything like demonstration in his daughters, and Mary's suppliant posture was a trial for which he was not prepared.

"Well, love?" he repeated.

"Oh, father, have mercy on me! Do not lay on me a burden greater than I can bear."

• "Your own good sense, Mary, will teach you to sustain a greater trial than any I shall demand of you. I know, my girl, it will be hard at first, and I am sorely grieved that your sister's ill conduct should be followed by such sad consequences to yourself. But I have duties to myself and to you, and must not shrink from them. Read that letter, Mary."

Mary took the letter. Its cold, hard tone cut her to the heart. The first few words convinced her that there was nothing to hope from her father's mercy, and as soon as she had read the fatal paragraph respecting herself and Herbert, she rose to her feet and walked towards the door.

"Mary!" exclaimed her father, half in anger,

half in fear, "Mary! what is the meaning of this?"

"Another victim! God forgive you," she replied, and left the room.

Mr. Campbell sat motionless in his arm chair gazing at the door through which that broken-hearted girl had just passed. He gazed long—as though he expected to see her return—but he gazed in vain, no Mary appeared. He had calculated upon a little more supplication,—a little more resistance to his high behests. He could then have lashed himself up into the fitting frame of mind for a martyr to a painful duty. But for this passive resignation he was not prepared, and he felt that Mary's words were true, she was a victim—a victim to his own evil passions.

Ten minutes had elapsed, he was gazing still, but no footstep was heard in the hall. Twenty minutes—half an hour—but the door never turned on its hinges, no Mary appeared. She had yielded at once, sadly and sorrowfully yielded to his despotic will.

"Resistance itself would have been much better than this. Why does she not return?" he exclaimed at length. "Nay, this is sullenness. I had expected other things from Mary. But at heart they are both alike. There is a lurking devil of disobedience in each, and it only shows itself in different ways. If she does not choose to give me an opportunity of reasoning with her, and shewing her the necessity of the pain I occasion her, she has no right to expect any very compassionate consideration at my hands."

Mr. Campbell folded up the letter, and immediately despatched a servant with it to the Vicarage. As soon as Mr. Edward Campbell had mastered its contents, he walked up to the Hall, but was refused admittance precisely in the same manner as on the day before. He saw Mary, however in the garden and joined her. She took his hand in silence.

"It is impossible, my dear Mary," he said, "to justify your father's conduct in this business. He seems to forget that there are two parties to

an engagement, like any other contract, and that it is not in his power to dissolve it alone. I cannot say that I should counsel you to the same open resistance to his wishes, which the circumstances rendered justifiable in Bertha's case—at least not at present—but I do not think you are bound to part with the man to whom you are engaged, without giving him a meeting, and I would therefore ask you to come down to the Vicarage this evening. Herbert will return to dinner, and then we can discuss what is the best course for all parties."

Mary promised to come at the appointed time, and her uncle left her. As soon as he had reached home he despatched the following letter to his brother:

"MY DEAR JOHN,—

"I deeply regret the very bitter tone which you have thought proper to assume towards me, and am conscious of not having deserved it. In your present mood I should consider it useless to attempt to bring about a reconciliation be-

tween us, and should allow the matter to rest here, were not the happiness of two other persons, most dear to both of us, so nearly concerned. I feel it therefore my duty to make another appeal, and this time to your honour and sense of justice rather than to your feelings.

“The very term engagement implies an agreement, in short a contract, and something therefore which has been made by two parties, and cannot be dissolved at pleasure by one of them. In asking me therefore to consider the engagement between our children at an end, you assume to yourself rights which do not belong to you, either by the moral law, or by the law of the land, which recognizes such agreements as binding. Believe me, it is with no small reluctance that I call your attention to this view of the case, but the very little weight which you appear to attach to the question as one of *feeling*, obliges me to point out to you that it is also one of *right*, and that this engagement can only be dissolved by a mutual understanding.

“Once more, dear John, let me entreat you

not to lay up for your old age such a source of bitter and unavailing remorse, as the recollection that you have destroyed the happiness of two young loving hearts. Remember that ere long you will have to appear before the judgment seat of One who condemns all pride as sin, and that you will find it difficult to justify your present cruel conduct in the sight of an all merciful God.

“ Believe me, dear John,

“ Ever your affectionate brother,

“ EDWARD CAMPBELL.”

When Herbert arrived that afternoon, and learnt the cause of the grave anxious look with which his father received him, his indignation knew no bounds. The expectation of Mary's visit soothed him in some measure, but it was easy to see by the workings of his countenance that he felt the blow most severely.

Mary came. It was a sad meeting. Herbert proposed that they should follow Egerton and

Bertha's example, but to this Mary objected most decidedly.

"No, Herbert," she said, "it may have been right for Bertha to act as she has done, but I feel that I cannot marry you without my father's consent. Besides, the only result would be to perpetuate the quarrel between him and my uncle, and the idea of my father living alone at Oakwood, with none but domestics around him, especially in his present state of mind, is too dreadful. No, Herbert, I cannot leave him in his old age."

"But you would have to leave him, Mary, if you married with his consent."

"Yes, but it would be different then," she replied. "We should live at Stonecombe, perhaps even at Oakwood, and I should see him nearly every day. Whereas now, Herbert, he would be quite alone, and might even die without having one of his family near him to close his eyes."

"But surely, Mary," said Herbert, passion-

ately, "surely you do not mean to give me up in consequence of this tyrannical command?"

"Not, if you do not wish it, Herbert; I only think we must be contented for the present with faith in each other's constancy, and hope for happier times."

Many sad words passed between the lovers that evening, and Mary's tears flowed freely when at length the hour arrived for Herbert to accompany her to her home. As Herbert did not wish to do anything that his uncle might construe as an act of defiance, they parted at the lodge gate. He seemed almost less able to command his feelings, than Mary.

"Hope," she said to encourage him, "hope shall be our watchword."

"Ah, Mary, but how can we hope when your father acts in such an unjustifiable and tyrannical—"

"Stop, Herbert!" said Mary interrupting him. "Remember that he *is* my father. Let

us take for our watchword, 'Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity.'"

Herbert kissed her, and they parted. He watched her slender form as long as the twilight enabled him to distinguish it, and then with a quick pace and heavy heart retraced his steps to the vicarage.

Mary sent an excuse to her father for not appearing in the drawing-room that evening, and had tea brought to her own room. The next morning at breakfast, Mr. Campbell was preparing to question her as to whom she had visited in Stonecombe the evening before, and had just looked towards her for that purpose, when Mary coughed. There was something in the cough, especially when connected with her great paleness and a certain hollow look about the cheeks, which excited his alarm, and instead of commencing the intended examination, he spoke to her with more kindness in his manner than he had shown for some time. Immediately after breakfast he sent for Dr. Freeman, who called in the course of the day, and examined

Mary with the stethoscope. The result he arrived at was, that the lungs were perfectly sound as yet, but that there was great delicacy, and a decided tendency to pulmonary complaint which made more than ordinary care desirable.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Isle of Wight is a very pretty place, and if we were going to be married, we do not know but what we might take our brides there for the honeymoon. (Query. Does the authorial plural extend to the author's spouse?) The seaside in summer is always very pleasant. That early bathe, which gives the coffee afterwards such a peculiar relish! Then the idling away a few hours on the beach; selecting the flattest stones for ducks and drakes, estimating one's skill by the number of times they hop; making little pops with the seaweed, so admirably adapted for that interesting purpose; shaking the sand and

pebbles out of one's shoes; trying to talk nautical to the fishermen; inquiring what the weather is likely to be on Tuesday week; taking a short sail, feeling a little—just a little, and then riding through the surf to *terra firma* on the back of the boatman;—all these things are a source of pleasure to the truly philosophic mind, even in its bachelor state. But when shared with another individual in a brown straw hat two feet and a half in diameter, with a desperately piquant piece of ribbon in front, to prevent the wind from running away with it; said individual carrying a volume of Tennyson in her pocket, and not boring one with it too much! No, we must pause. Our feelings cannot stand this sort of thing any longer. Indeed, as it is, we fear the printer will hardly be able to decipher the copy, so blotted is it with our tears.

That fortnight at Bonchurch and Ventnor was a happy time for Egerton and Bertha, all the more so, indeed, for the contrast it presented to the feverish excitement of the preceding period. The alternation between the bitter dissension

and gloomy silence of the last week at Oakwood had put Bertha's spirits to a very severe trial. But now that the immediate pressure was removed, a good conscience and the constant companionship of an affectionate husband enabled her to enjoy the present, in spite of the painful reminiscences of the past that would occasionally intrude themselves on her thoughts. Mary had determined, with the most praiseworthy self-denial, not to sadden her sister's first experience of married life by recounting the history of her own troubles; and though Bertha could not help perceiving the tinge of melancholy that pervaded her letters, she little suspected the cause.

At length the time arrived when the young married couple were to exchange the sea, with its ever varying tints and fresh breezes, for furnished lodgings in Pentonville. Much as Bertha would have preferred being mistress of her own establishment, however humble, the uncertainty of their future proceedings made them decide in favour of the other plan as by far the most economical of the two.

Love in lodgings, and love in a cottage! What a contrast! When the fair Arabella pictures to herself the delights of living on a limited income, if only shared by Edwin, what are the images of bliss that hover before that young lady's mind? Clearly these. A white cloth covers the table in the little arbour, fragrant flowers perfume the air; thrushes, blackbirds, and nightingales fascinate the ear with their melodious warblings; she herself is preparing syllabub as a part of the evening repast, while Edwin is standing on a ladder, nailing jasmines and woodbine to the trellis work that surrounds the lattice window of the nuptial chamber. This, reader, is love in a cottage. Should the reality turn out to be love in lodgings, what are the experiences which that young lady may safely look forward to without incurring much risk of disappointment? Sky blue for the evening repast, an eternal hurdy gurdy under the window; dear Edwin's boots never cleaned properly in spite of the eighteen pence weekly extra, and a mysterious disappearance of the tea

of a merchant's clerk. Literature was the field for which he felt himself the best qualified, but literature is a sorry profession to keep a wife upon. It was thus that he found himself in the position of innumerable other young men in the English metropolis, with superior talents, an excellent education, and a willingness to work, but quite at a loss how to earn his bread. Unfortunately he ranked neither among the relations nor the intimate friends of Lord Windworth, and was therefore excluded by his Lordship's most unquestionable maxims of state policy from any prospect of official employment.

After considering and reconsidering all these various professions, and the objections to each of them, Egerton and Herbert agreed at length that his pen was his only remaining source. If after a short trial this should fail him, he would then adopt Herbert's suggestion, and emigrate to Australia or New Zealand.

Politics and political economy were the branches of study in which Egerton took the most lively interest, and he would gladly have

made his débüt as author in a treatise on some subject connected with them. But Herbert observed that although such a work might obtain him reputation, it most assuredly would not have much effect in filling his exchequer, and accordingly advised him to try his skill at a work of fiction.

Egerton gave his whole mind to the task before him, and at the end of three months had completed a short novel in one volume. He hurried off with the MS. to a celebrated publisher, who regretted extremely that he had as many works on his hands as he wished to undertake at present, but added that if Egerton would leave the MS. with him for a few weeks he would give it a favourable consideration.

Six weeks elapsed, and not having heard anything from Messrs. Q—— and Co., he called again. Mr. Q—— assured him that his reader had been so much occupied as not to be able to find the necessary time, but promised him an answer in a fortnight at latest. The fortnight elapsed, but brought with it no result. At length

at the end of three weeks, Egerton received a polite note, informing him that Messrs. Q—— and Co., had heard a very favorable report of the merits of the work, and should be happy to publish it for Mr. Egerton should he wish it, but that they did not feel disposed to do so at their own risk.

As Egerton doubted his ability to produce at present a better book than the one he had just written, he felt its rejection by Q—— and Co. as a severe disappointment. It seemed almost to settle at once and for ever the question of authorship as a means of livelihood, and his thoughts again reverted to New Zealand. He had kept up a very lively intercourse with Pardow during the preceding months, and had acquainted him with all the important events that had taken place during that time. Three days had seldom elapsed without the friends seeing each other, and both Egerton and Bertha placed so much reliance on Pardow's judgment and practical sense, that there was perhaps no person to whom they felt more inclined to apply

for advice whenever they required it. After calling on Messrs. Q—— and Co. for the MS., it was not unnatural therefore that Egerton should direct his steps to Pardow's lodgings. He had almost made up his mind to emigrate, but he thought that a little conversation with Pardow might enable him to see all the *pros* and *cons* for such a weighty step in a clearer light.

"There is no doubt," said Pardow, after he had heard a detailed account of Egerton's position, "there is no doubt that your papa-in-law treated you most abominably in that matter of Sir James Peter and Co. But what you mean by saying you are in a bad way, as far as financial matters are concerned, I can't conceive. Why man, you have a regular fortune. Three thousand pounds are twenty thousand dollars. You are a rich man, Egerton, by Jove you are; and positively don't know it! *Potz tausend!* I should have esteemed myself lucky indeed, if I had ever had such a start in life as that."

"But the question is," replied Egerton, "what profession I am to choose, and what I am

to do with a sum, the interest of which is not more than a quarter of the smallest income upon which we can live in London?"

"You say," replied Pardow, "that the professions are closed to you because they don't pay for such a number of years. Then I should say follow the bent of your own inclinations and write, man. Write books, and I will puff them among all my pupils right and left. I am sure they will deserve it."

"The pupils deserve the infliction for their sins, or the books the puffing?" said Egerton laughing.

"Oh, as for the pupils, they will be eternally grateful," said Pardow.

"But you see that my first attempt has been a decided failure. I believe my novel of the Merchant's Clerk to be as good as anything I can produce at present, and yet Mr. Q. evidently believes he would only lose by publishing it."

"Mr. Q.'s reader must be a man of no discernment. I don't understand much of these

things myself, but I have a friend who does, and perhaps he can give you a hint that may be useful. Suppose you take a chop with me in a friendly way on Saturday at six o'clock, and I will introduce you to Thwaites. He is a pleasant sort of fellow, knows a thing or two about publishers and publishing, and will be only too happy to aid any friend of mine with his experience."

"I accept your invitation with great pleasure," said Egerton, "and shall be very glad to make the acquaintance of Mr. Thwaites."

"I am sorry I cannot ask Mrs. Egerton to accompany you, but my establishment is not on a very splendid scale, and I therefore think we had better make it a mere bachelor's party. Besides, Thwaites would perhaps be more reserved if Mrs. Egerton were with us, and I want him to talk."

"No apologies," said Egerton; "I shall hope to see you to tea some evening soon. For the present, however, I must wish you good morning."

"Good morning," said Pardow. "Sharp six,

remember, and nothing but a chop or something similar."

Saturday came, and Egerton made his appearance at Pardow's lodgings at the appointed hour. Mr. Thwaites arrived immediately afterwards, and dinner was announced. The promised chop, however, had somehow got transmogrified into boiled soles, harico mutton and orange jelly, to which the whole party did ample justice. Something seemed to tickle Mr. Thwaites' fancy when Egerton was introduced to him, and several times during dinner he appeared to regard him with a comical expression of curiosity. The conversation was lively, and Egerton felt convinced that his new acquaintance was an intelligent man, possessing a considerable knowledge of the literary world and its ways.

At length the cloth was removed, and the dessert was placed upon the table.

"Though my name is probably not known to you, Mr. Egerton," said Mr. Thwaites, as he passed the port, "I have known yours for some weeks past."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Egerton, rather surprised.

"I think you are the author of a novel not yet published, called the Merchant's Clerk, are you not?"

"How came you to know that?" said Egerton, who had never heard of Mr. Thwaites till two days previously.

"I did not tell him," said Pardow, in self-defence.

Mr. Thwaites seemed much amused at Egerton's surprise.

"The mystery is easily cleared up," he said. "You sent the MS. to Messrs. Q. and Co., and as you did not enjoin secrecy, they casually mentioned your name when they gave it me to read. I am one of their readers, and can honestly assure you that in my opinion, the Merchant's Clerk displays great talent."

"But still you could not give it a very favorable character to Mr. Q.," said Egerton, who began to think Mr. Thwaites must be a bit of a humbug after all.

"My duty was not to judge of the merits of the work in itself, but of the degree in which it would suit the public taste, and, therefore prove a good speculation. The publisher's reader has a different office from that of the critic. The latter has to guide, the former only to follow the opinion of the public in these matters. Perhaps I can make my meaning most intelligible, by telling you what are the novels the public like best. They come under different categories. First there is the genus, spicy novel, which is again divisible into the two species of sour and sweet, or pickles and preserves. In the former you make almost all your characters very worldly. You dissect motives with a most painfully minute-scalpel, and show what a mass of corruption the human heart really is, and that anything like a true hero, is a mere chimera of the imagination."

"But is that the public taste?"

"Certainly. If the worldliness and wickedness are only described with sufficient piquancy and humour, there cannot be too much of them.

Only do it wittily, and you may gloat over human infirmities for pages together. The world will only think the more kindly of your own character for the zest with which you dwell on all that is most weak and contemptible in others."

"But then," replied Egerton, "are there to be no virtuous characters?"

"I won't say that," replied Mr. Thwaites; "oh no, virtue is quite admissible, only it must always be made ridiculous by being united with a weak intellect. Make your good people silly, and the reading public will be delighted with your truth to nature."

"And what are the characteristics of the sweet novel, genus spicy?"

"They have a great many characters among the lower orders of society, genial, cozy, good sort of people, whose acquaintance it is a real pleasure to make. Some few miracles of benevolence are occasionally introduced; but eccentric benevolence, to prevent the sweetness from palling on the taste. The spicy novels of both

species are very successful and pay excellently. We should have more of them if it were not for one little difficulty."

"And what is that?"

"Simply that they require a man of genius to write them. In the pickles, for instance, the acid must be very delicately mixed with a few sweets, or it offends the palate."

"I am afraid," said Egerton, "that if the spicy novel is the public taste, I shall never write a successful one."

"But the spicy is by no means the only kind that pays, Mr. Egerton. Take, for instance, another sort; I allude to the sky blue, or London milk genus. In these there are always a great many female characters, and all extremely amiable, soft indeed, I may say, in every sense of the word. Let them go on tittle tattle, tittle tattle, through many pages of innocent twaddle, by which means you develop their characters; that is to say, you exhibit all the different phases and gradations of vapidty with which female loveliness is capable of being combined.

Never bother yourself about the plot in this kind of novel; the pretty prattle is its essence. Incidents indeed, are rather to be avoided than otherwise, as rendering them too exciting; at least with one exception. Yes, I think I may say that a fire in a country house has always been considered unobjectionable by even the most particular mammas. When I commence reading a novel of this kind, the first question that suggests itself to my mind, is whether 'The Hall' is insured to its full value, because I know that the heroine is going to wake in the night half suffocated with smoke."

"But what is it," said Egerton, "that makes these novels take?"

"Their pretty innocence," replied Mr. Thwaites. "Write a book of this sort, and mammas innumerable will bless you, for they can safely place such works in their daughter's hands without any danger of injury to their morals."

"So I should think," said Egerton, rather amused.

"But if you want to do the thing completely, I would advise you to throw in a spice of sectarianism, only taking care that the sect be not too small a one. Excuse me for saying so, Mr. Egerton, but in your novel you have neglected all those rules of high art, which the public have stamped with their approbation. You do not revel in all the most disgusting phases of human nature, and appear on the contrary to think that the hero should actually have something heroic about him. There never was a greater blunder. Give your hero very shiny boots, and never mind about his *morale*. But there is one fault almost greater still."

"And what is that?" said Egerton.

"Your principal character is not either rich and of good family, on the one hand, or belonging to the lowest class of society on the other. But a man without wealth or title, with a tolerable education, and an income large enough to keep him from want! Pah! How could such a man be interesting! That would require a Dickens, Sir, at least."

“And are there then no novels in which the severe critic and the publisher’s reader may agree? I mean novels in which the fascination of genius is allied with true art?”

“Heaven forbid! There are several such, but their name is not legion. Besides the names which are in the mouths of all, I would mention a few works by one or two modern authoresses, which are faithful, and at the same time artistic pictures of human life. The canvass is not crowded with figures—each of them is an individual character—and they are brought together in an action which is replete with human interests, gives a pleasing unity to the whole, and leaves an elevating effect upon the reader’s mind.”

CHAPTER VIII.

It was past eleven o'clock, and the little byestreet in which Egerton lived had already put on its customary garb of nocturnal repose, and most of its sober inhabitants their night-caps. The organ-grinder, whose lugubrious music might be heard every night at about ten o'clock, and regularly woke up all the babies that were teething or otherwise fractiously disposed, had left his post a long time, and the stillness was only occasionally interrupted by the vocal performances of sundry hilarious clerks, who had

commenced their mutual civilities of seeing each other home, at an unusually early hour.

Egerton had not yet returned from dining with Pardow, and Bertha was sitting up to welcome him. She had felt very sleepy for some time, but had kept herself awake by reading a recent publication on New Zealand, and building a castle in the air in the shape of a log hut with cow-house attached, containing an Alderney of surpassing beauty.

At length she laid aside her book and took up her work. What a funny little piece of work it was to be sure! It almost looked like a large doll's under garment, and yet Bertha was too old for a doll! It must have been a whim of hers; but whatever it was, it seemed to interest her a good deal. By some extraordinary process it knocked down the log hut, and the cowhouse at a blow, dissolved the Alderney into thin air, and replaced them with a moving panorama of her married life, and all therewith connected.

"I am very happy," she thought to herself, "to possess such a treasure as Henry's love, and

as far as my married life is concerned, if I did but know how to dispel that sad, careworn look of his, I should have nothing left to wish for. But the difficulty of finding any suitable occupation, and his disappointment about his novel, have depressed his spirits so much lately, that I cannot bear to see it. How gladly would I make any sacrifice to relieve him of this dreadful anxiety about our future prospects! I believe that after all it will be our best plan to emigrate. But then again he is so much more alarmed about my health than there is any real occasion for, although I should certainly have preferred a sea voyage at any other time. I think I shall write to Mary soon, and tell her of my hopes for next summer. Poor girl! how gladly would she resign some of that wealth that is destined for herself alone, if she could only save us from this exile! One tenth part of what my father once intended should be mine, would spare us all these trials, and enable us to look on the future with far different eyes. We are all sufferers through his pride, and, as I fear, himself not the

least so. In a few years he will see these things differently; but it seems as if we must wait for that sad parting which will make regrets unavailing. Mary gives no hope of a reconciliation, and tells me in her last letter that his irritability has increased so much, that she dares not even ask permission to pay me a visit! And then her own health seems declining. Oh, that I could but do something to soothe her sorrow, and comfort her under her own heavy affliction."

Bertha looked for Mary's letter, and as she marked the tone of hopeless despondency that pervaded every line, she felt that her father had indeed much to answer for. She could not regard her own disobedience to him as a sin, but still in the sight of the Omniscient her act might appear in other colours, and she now knelt down and prayed that God would forgive her, if, indeed she had erred, that He would soften her father's heart while it was yet time, and that her gentle, loving sister might not fall a victim to his obdurate resentment. And when she rose from her

knees her heart felt the lighter for the strength her faith had gained in Him who disposes all things for good.

The neighbouring church clock had just struck the two quarters, and warned her that it only wanted half-an-hour of midnight, when she heard Egerton's step on the stairs.

"Well, dear," he said as he entered the room. "I have learnt one thing to-day at any rate, which it is better to know at once, as it may save me from future disappointment. But, dear Bertha," he continued, as he kissed her, "what is the matter, love? I see you have been crying."

"Oh, it is nothing, Henry," said Bertha, trying to smile. "I have only been thinking of poor Mary, and reading her last letter, and I cannot feel very happy, when I remember how miserable she is."

"Ah, Bertha," he replied, "I only wish I could hit on any plan to soften your father's heart towards her. I had once thought of writing to him myself, and appealing to his

sense of justice, and urging him not to let the innocent suffer for the guilty, if, indeed, we deserve that name."

"I fear, Henry, it would be of no avail. Indeed it would, probably, only make matters worse. But what is this important thing that you have learnt to-day?"

"It is, dearest," said Egerton, as he sat down before the fire for a few minutes cozy chat before going to bed, "it is that I am not cut out by nature to make my bread by writing books. I may, perhaps, do something in that way eventually, but as yet I want experience of life. I am likely to have enough of it ere long, and that not of the most cheering character, at least if things do not take a more favourable turn."

"But you must not lose heart," said Bertha. "Perhaps if Q. & Co. will not take your novel, you may have more success with another publisher."

"Lose heart, Bertha!" exclaimed Egerton. "I should think not, indeed! I could almost be angry at your imagining such a thing. No, I

mean to try several other publishers before I even give up my poor Merchant's Clerk. Besides that, writing novels is not the only way of earning money. While walking home, I have been thinking what other plan I could adopt, and one has suggested itself which may at least bring some little grist to the mill."

"What is it, Henry?"

"Private pupils. I have not taken a degree, and that will make it more difficult to get any, but I will try."

"Suppose you were to advertise in the Athenæum?"

"A capital idea, Bertha. I will see about it to-morrow."

The next number of the Athenæum contained an advertisement on its first page, to the effect that a gentleman educated at Cambridge was willing to devote some hours daily to the preparation of young men for either of the Universities. Persons desirous of availing themselves of his assistance were requested to leave their addresses with Mr. H., the bookseller.

Four days in succession did Egerton call on Mr. H. to enquire if anyone had answered the advertisement; but, alas! only to be disappointed. His first attempt at authorship had failed, and he was now beginning to despair of finding any means of earning his livelihood in England, and had pretty well determined on emigration as his only resource.

"Try Mr. H. once more," said Bertha. "People do not always make up their mind so quickly, and perhaps you will be successful this time."

"I fear it is of no use," said Egerton, "and it is raining hard. However, rain or no rain, I must have some exercise, and I may as well go there as anywhere else."

Bertha awaited his return in anxious expectation, and many little expeditions did she make to the window to see if a certain dark green umbrella was approaching the house. She felt that in spite of that beau ideal of an Alderney, neither herself nor her husband were particularly well suited by their previous life

and education for roughing it in the bush, or haggling with the colonists about the price of their cheeses, and, that to leave old England and all it contained of nearest and dearest, would be a hard trial for them both. It was with no slight pleasure, therefore, that on the occasion of one such expeditions, she distinctly recognized the umbrella in question, and a minute afterwards heard Egerton ascend the stairs with a lighter and a quicker step than usual. He had been successful. She could not doubt it.

"Hurrah, Bertha! good news at last! Mr. H. was not at home, but the shopman said that some gentleman had sent in the course of the day to say he wished to see me. He did not know the address himself, but I am going to call this evening, and learn it of Mr. H."

It was the happiest day they had known for some time. It was but a trifle after all, but it offered a gleam of hope.

"If I can only get one pupil," said Egerton, "it may lead to others, and although the occu-

pation may be neither very interesting nor very dignified, I don't care a pin for that, if I can only make my way for the present. In time I will do something better, or my name is not Henry Egerton."

A little before tea-time Egerton sallied forth again, to learn the name of the youthful individual who was desirous of enlightenment at his hands. He soon returned, but this time his step sounded less joyous than before.

"Why, Henry," said Bertha sadly, "has it not come to anything, or why do you look so disappointed?"

"I might have saved the money I paid for that advertisement, Bertha. It seems I had not left Mr. H.'s shop ten minutes this morning, before the gentleman sent a servant to say that he had made other arrangements, and therefore would not trouble me to call."

"How very provoking."

"Never mind, love. I will go again in a couple of days, and perhaps I may then be able to bring you better news."

"By the bye," exclaimed Bertha suddenly, "a letter came for you while you were out. I had almost forgotten it. There it is on the mantel-piece."

"Why, these are Lord Windworth's arms," said Egerton, as he examined the seal! "Can his lordship have changed his mind, and intend to do the handsome thing after all?"

Bertha watched the expression of her husband's face as he hastily read the letter, but she saw nothing in it to afford her any comfort.

"What is it all about, Henry? Pray do tell me at once, for I am dying of curiosity."

"Lord Windworth! Lord Windworth, of all people in the world, wants me to prepare his son for Trinity! The only man, perhaps, in this metropolis, whose threshold I would refuse to cross on such an errand! You recollect that I met Lord Botherton in the street the morning after I had put in the advertisement, and that I mentioned my wish to him. I have no doubt he spoke of it to Lord Windworth; at least, he says in his letter, that he has heard of my intention

of taking pupils, and that he would feel much gratified if he could secure the advantage of my valuable assistance, &c., &c. Oh, it is all very polite, of course. Confound his politeness!"

Bertha could not help feeling vexed that Egerton should lose this chance of an opening, nor did she sympathise in his resentment to its whole extent.

"But why, Henry," she said, after a few moments' silence, "why should you refuse to take Lord Windworth's son as a pupil? It is true the father has not treated you very handsomely, but I cannot see—"

"No, Bertha, I cannot stoop to that. He has not behaved honourably towards me, and now to accept his assistance in this form would be degrading. I cannot do it. But make tea, love. Our future prospects are not very brilliant, but we may as well enjoy the present, and a cup of tea will cheer us up."

Bertha looked at her husband as he said these words, and when she saw his pale and careworn face, she felt, indeed, that he did want cheering.

"Don't be cast down, dear Henry," she said, laying her hand on her husband's shoulder, and trying her best to look bright and happy. "We can always emigrate to New Zealand, you know, and I look forward with confidence to your becoming a great man in the colony. We shall get on very well yet."

"There is no fear of that, Bertha, but I cannot help feeling a little disappointed."

A knock was heard at the door, and immediately afterwards Pardow made his appearance.

"That is delightful," said Egerton, as his friend entered the room. "You have come just in time for tea."

"I am heartily glad to hear it. Good evening, Mrs. Egerton. I have not seen your husband since he met Thwaites, and felt anxious to know whether he had commenced a spicy novel or a sky blue."

"Neither," said Egerton, with a grave smile. "I don't mean to try another at present. I have advertised for pupils."

"And have you had any success?"

"I have had one application, and unfortunately cannot avail myself of it."

"Is the juvenile too hopelessly thickheaded," said Pardow, "or so very sharp that he is beyond you? I should not believe the latter in a hurry, though, for I regard you as a very storehouse of classical learning, and a mathematical prodigy as well."

"It is not the juvenile's fault, nor mine either," said Egerton, "but the juvenile's papa's."

"And who is this most objectionable parent? Will he not pay a reasonable salary?"

"It is Lord Windworth," replied Egerton.

"What! The wealthy Lord Windworth so stingy as all that! Well, I should hardly have believed it possible."

"No, Pardow, you misunderstand me. He has not refused my terms, for, indeed, I have not seen him; but you don't suppose that after what has passed between us, I would ever cross his threshold as his son's tutor?"

"Excuse me, Mrs. Egerton," said Pardow, "and don't put me into your black books for ever; but I see that your husband wants a philosophic scolding if he is to attain the true philosophic peace, and with your permission I must give it him. Why, my dear fellow," he continued, turning to Egerton, "you surely do not mean to tell me, that all those little preachments of mine have fallen on such stony soil! What, after all, has this unhappy lord done, that the heir of Weathercock Castle should be precluded the advantage of your instruction?"

"Do you not see," said Egerton, a little annoyed, "that after the father's conduct to me, I cannot enter his house, or accept his assistance in any form, without a loss of self-respect?"

"Upon my word, Egerton, if your self-respect treats you so very scurvily, I think you should get rid of it as soon as possible. Lord Windworth has acted shabbily—granted; but then in crying off with regard to that little place, he has only done what is a very common thing

with men of his rank and in his position, and he is not in the least conscious of wrong in the matter. Only remember how the poor man is pestered about such things by people whose votes are of no small importance to the government! I dare say, if it were convenient to assist you to a place to-morrow, he would do it; but he does not feel inclined to bestow his patronage without getting something for it, which, unfortunately you cannot now give him. Now in the present case you stand upon equal terms with him; for though the fee may be of assistance to you, your superior knowledge is of no less assistance to him in the education of his son. It is a matter of bargain and sale, and neither party can play grand, as having placed the other under an obligation."

"I am so glad you see it in that light, Mr. Pardow," said Bertha.

Egerton was silent. Pardow saw that his words had produced some effect, and did not interrupt his friend's meditations.

"Well," said Egerton, at length, "I suppose

it is a bit of the old pride in me, but I could not see it quite in that light at first. It will cost me something, but I will call on his lordship tomorrow, and see what I can pump into the brains of his honorable son."

"I trust and believe," said Pardow, "that by doing so you will gain instead of lose in self-respect, and therefore, in the true philosophic peace. At any rate you will gain in the respect of a humble, philosophising individual who shall be nameless."

Egerton kept his word and called on Lord Windworth, who, now that his patronage was not in question, received him with more kindness and less condescension than on the former occasion of their meeting. The arrangements were soon made, and Egerton was duly installed in his new duties.

Several months passed away, but Egerton obtained no new pupils. The remuneration he received from Lord Windworth was handsome in itself, but not sufficient to go far towards maintaining a wife. Bertha was expecting

moreover, to become a mother in the course of a few months, and though her prospects were a source of great joy both to herself and Egerton, they were not unattended with anxiety under their present circumstances, for the hopes they had formerly entertained of being able to remain in England were now at an end.

When the all-important step was once decided on, it was felt to be a great relief. Their little capital was poverty in England, but would be wealth to a new settler; and having made up their minds to the sacrifices that emigration necessarily entailed, they thought as little about them as possible, and dwelt only on the brighter features of the picture. Perhaps, indeed, if success attended them, they might realize a sufficient fortune in ten or a dozen years, to enable them to return. At any rate a new country awoke new hopes, and the curiosity they felt respecting their future home, and the bustle of preparation gave such a fresh stimulus to their spirits, and so occupied their minds, as to leave but little time for vain regrets.

As soon as Herbert heard of their determination he came to London, and rendered them all the aid in his power. Mr. Edward Campbell also paid them a visit, and insisted on Bertha's accepting the promised £2000 as a parting gift.

There was one thing, however, which Bertha felt deeply. Mr. Campbell's irritability had increased to such an extent, and Mary's health had become so delicate, that she had not the courage to ask his permission to visit her sister before she left England.

Many a time did Bertha shed tears in secret, when the thought would come across her, that she had taken her final leave of Mary on the morning on which she had left Oakwood. But she did not see how a meeting between them could be arranged, and endeavoured to resign herself to an unavoidable necessity.

CHAPTER IX.

As soon as Egerton had engaged a cabin in the Falcon, 500 tons register, Captain Barclay, bound for Wellington, New Zealand, he wrote to Lord Windworth, informing him of his intended emigration, and regretting that it would be out of his power to continue his instruction to Lord Highgale after the end of the current month. Lord Windworth acknowledged the communication in a polite note, thanking Egerton for the pains he had taken with Lord Highgale, and assuring him of his best wishes for his future success.

Three days afterwards, as Egerton was engaged in a fruitless endeavour to open his youthful Lordship's mind to the mysteries of the exponential theorem, a servant entered the room, and informed him that Lord Windworth wished to speak to him before he left the house. Accordingly, as soon as the lesson was concluded, Egerton repaired to his lordship's study.

"Good morning, Mr. Egerton," said Lord Windworth, with more genuine kindness in his manner than he had shewn before. "Pray take a chair. I wanted to ask you how Adolphus has been getting on lately, and whether you are satisfied with his attention to his studies?"

"Very much so, my lord, as far as classics are concerned, but I am afraid he will never make any great progress in mathematics. He has good abilities, but they do not lie in that direction."

"Well, well, I dare say he will be able to get through life without them. Indeed I have always attached far more importance to his classical studies, and am very glad to hear so favourable

a report of them. And so you think of leaving England very shortly!"

"Yes, my lord, I do. I have taken my passage to New Zealand, and shall sail in about six weeks from this time."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lord Windworth, apparently a good deal surprised. "I hope you will excuse my curiosity," he continued, casting a rather searching glance at Egerton, "but are you able to wind up *all* your affairs in Europe in so very short a time?"

"Unfortunately," replied Egerton, who, in his turn, was rather surprised at the enquiry, "unfortunately my affairs are far too simple to require much time for winding up. I have few preparations to make beyond purchasing the necessary outfit, and that is very soon done."

"Ah, I suppose so. Necessary outfit—ah—hm—yes; that as you observe, is very soon done. Pray have you heard any news lately of the Italian lady and her son?"

"Does your lordship allude to Lady Egerton,

my brother's widow?" asked Egerton, a good deal offended at the disrespectful tone in which Lord Windworth had alluded to his sister-in-law.

"We will call her Lady Egerton, if you particularly desire it," replied Lord Windworth, smiling at Egerton's warmth; "but I should have thought you would have been the last man to acknowledge her claim to that title."

"I am at a loss to understand your lordship's meaning. Being the widow of the late Sir William Egerton, her claim to the title of Lady Egerton, is, I imagine, quite indisputable."

"Of course, of course, if the lady in question is *really* the widow of Sir William."

"Have you any reason to doubt it, my lord?"

"Oh, as to that, I can form no opinion. I only know that such doubts exist in the minds of others."

"May I ask to whom your lordship refers?"

"Certainly; but before I answer your question, I should like to ask you if you have received no accounts from Rome, lately?"

"My correspondence with Mr. Robertson, an intimate friend of my late brother's, has ceased since he left Italy for the Holy Land. But I have received a couple of short letters from Lady Egerton, in which she thanks me for the interest I take in my young nephew, and regrets that she has been detained at Rome, longer than she expected."

"And this Mr. Robertson has never mentioned that there was great reason for doubting that any marriage ever took place?"

"He has not dropped the least hint to that effect."

"H-m. Mr. Robertson was a friend of Sir William's," said Lord Windworth, musingly. "He may perhaps entertain some little projects of his own, for Lady Egerton is not altogether a bad *partie*. I can understand *his* silence; but that you should have heard nothing about it from any other quarter, is really quite incomprehensible."

"And what has your lordship heard?"

"Not a great deal. But what information I

have, is from a good authority. My brother, Mr. Highgale, as perhaps you are aware, is our minister at Florence, though at this moment he is in London. He has been at Rome lately, and he tells me that the person claiming to be Lady Egerton, and her pretended marriage with your brother, are among the principal topics of the day among the English residing there. He says that they cannot by any possibility have been married by a Catholic priest, as the lady is a member of the Church of Rome, and no dispensation had been obtained from the Pope."

"May they not have been married without one?"

"No priest would entertain such an idea for a moment. He would not incur the risk. It is almost as certain that they cannot have been married by any Protestant clergyman, as the marriage could hardly have been solemnized without the knowledge of the English Consul."

"But my brother speaks of the marriage as a fact," replied Egerton. "Perhaps they were

married at one of the British Legations in Italy; Florence or Naples, for instance."

"Not at Florence certainly, or my brother would have known it. Besides this, some English persons who have taken the matter up, have not only written to Naples, but to every other place where there was any Protestant clergyman, and they have not been able to find any trace of the marriage whatever."

"But surely the simplest plan would have been to apply to Lady Egerton herself. She at least must know both where she was married, and by whom."

"Unfortunately the lady preserves a most dignified silence on the subject, and refuses to give any information beyond the mere fact that she was married to your brother. That is the worst feature of her case, for if she could prove her marriage she would hardly persist in a reserve, which is attended with such disagreeable consequences to herself. She is not acknowledged by the English residents, and is universally regarded as your late brother's mistress.

And really I cannot blame them. For my own part, I frankly confess I share their opinion."

"I, my lord, on the contrary am convinced they are mistaken, for I never can believe that my poor brother—"

"Young men will be young men, Mr. Egerton," said Lord Windworth with an incredulous smile.

"I never can believe," continued Egerton, with a slight shade of indignation in his voice, and not heeding the interruption, "that my poor brother was guilty of so dishonorable an act as to palm off his mistress upon me for his wife, and thus attempt to defraud me of my just inheritance."

"We will hope so for his own sake, Mr. Egerton, if not for yours. But a *grande passion* you know will sometimes play sad tricks with a man's conscience. But whether right or wrong that is the way in which the lady's silence is interpreted."

"It is very odd that I should never have heard a word about it till now," replied Egerton.



"When I received your letter the other day, I expected to find that your reason for giving up Lord Highgale, was your intention of taking possession of Hebworth and assuming the title. You may imagine my astonishment when I found you contemplated emigrating to New Zealand."

"This intelligence, my lord, is so important, and at the same time so unexpected, that I must give it a little calm consideration before I take any steps. As far, however, as I can judge at present I think I shall have to make a rapid journey to Rome, and in this case I should feel much obliged if your lordship would procure me a letter of introduction to the English consul."

"With the greatest pleasure, though from what my brother says, I think you may reckon on the Consul's assistance, without any other introduction than the proof of your identity contained in your passport. You see, Mr. Egerton, no Englishman very much relishes the idea of an old English baronetcy devolving upon the son of an Italian woman of low birth. But you shall

have a letter all the same, and I will ask him to forward your views in any way that you may both deem advisable."

"Thank you, my lord," replied Egerton with a rather peculiar smile, which Lord Windworth, in spite of all his knowledge of the world, could not quite comprehend. "Might I trespass so far on your lordship's kindness," he continued, "as to beg that I may have the letter in the course of to-day, or by to-morrow morning at latest, for if I decide on a trip to Italy, I shall probably start as soon as I can get my passport."

"You shall have the letter this evening, Mr. Egerton; but I would advise you to do nothing rashly. It seems to me very doubtful whether a journey to Rome would be the proper course. At any rate, I think you should first consult with your solicitor. He will be able to give you the best advice in the matter; but as far as I can judge, your first object should be to take possession of Hebworth, and then leave it to the other parties to eject you if they can. In order

to do so they will have to prove the marriage. Besides this, you know the old proverb, that possession is nine points of the law."

"I shall see my solicitor to-day," replied Egerton, "and that I may lose no time I will call on him at once. Accept my best thanks, my lord, for the communication you have just made me, and the kind interest you have shewn in my welfare. And now, as I have a good deal to do as well as to think of, I will wish your lordship good morning."

"Good morning, Mr. Egerton. You have my best wishes for your success."

After leaving Lord Windworth, Egerton took the first cab he could find and drove to Mr. Patterson's office.

"Mr. Patterson is out of town, sir, and will not be back for several days," was the answer he received to his enquiries for that gentleman. "Mr. Andrews is in his room, if you would like to see him. He has a gentleman with him at this moment, but he will be disengaged directly."

As Mr. Andrews, Mr. Patterson's partner,

was a comparative stranger to him, Egerton felt some repugnance to consulting him on a subject, in which family interests of so delicate a nature were deeply concerned. Time however was pressing, and he was hesitating what answer to make the clerk, when Mr. Andrews entered the office from his private room.

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Egerton. I am sorry that Mr. Patterson is out of town, but if you would wait two minutes I shall be very much at your service. Have those papers been sent to Mr. Sharpman, Brown; or are they still here?"

"Went this morning, sir; two hours ago."

Mr. Andrews retired to his room again, without giving Egerton an opportunity to reply. He returned however in a very few minutes, and after following his client to the door, begged Egerton to walk in.

"I think I can guess on what subject you wish to see Mr. Patterson," said the attorney, with a rather intelligent wink. "The fact is, Mr. Patterson intended to communicate with

you upon it almost immediately. He has delayed doing so as yet, partly from the wish to obtain a little additional information, and partly from an accidental pressure of business just now."

"My object in wishing to see Mr. Patterson this morning," replied Egerton, "is merely to learn if he has heard anything of a strange report which has just reached me, about Lady Egerton's position at Rome."

"Exactly so, exactly so, my dear sir; that is the subject to which I alluded. But really you must not speak of her as Lady Egerton—you must not indeed. Excuse the liberty I take, but it is always safer you know never to appear for an instant to acknowledge the claims of an adverse party. Always throw cold water upon them in whatever way you can."

"I suppose that is the proper professional course," said Egerton smiling.

"Of course, of course it is, Sir Henry. Nay indeed you must allow me to call you so," continued the attorney, in answer to a gesture of

impatience on the part of Egerton. "You must, positively. I have very little doubt that your brother was not married at all, and am rejoiced to hear that this is the general impression among the English residents at Rome."

"And on what grounds have you formed this opinion?"

"Mr Haliburton, who has come direct from Rome, was at our office three days since, and told Mr. Patterson that the person calling herself Lady Egerton, was not received or acknowledged among the English in any way, and that the marriage was regarded as a mere fabrication. According to all accounts she must have rather a wretched life of it at present."

"Poor thing! William hardly buried before his widow is regarded as little better than his mistress!"

"Really, really, my dear sir, you must not speak of her as his widow. Pity will come in very well afterwards, that is to say, in case she gives you no trouble, and I do not well see how she can. Mr. Patterson and myself have rather re-

gretted that you did not assume the title at once, and formally take possession of Hebworth. But it was impossible to foresee all these things, and I dare say it is not yet too late."

"I will not take up any more of your time at present, Mr. Andrews, but shall feel obliged if you will ask Mr. Patterson to write to me any information he may possess, and to direct to me *poste restante*, Rome. I shall start for Rome immediately."

"Start for Rome immediately!" exclaimed Mr. Andrews. "Start for Rome before you have seen Mr. Patterson! Pardon me for saying so, but I think, my dear sir, such a course would be very unadvisable, and I feel sure that Mr. Patterson would be of the same opinion. You see the thing is, that if you remain here and take possession, the *onus probandi*—"

"I think," interrupted Egerton, "that we shall not gain much by discussing the question any farther. I intend to start for Rome the day after to-morrow, and shall feel obliged if

you will communicate my wishes to Mr. Patterson. If he knows of any thoroughly respectable English solicitor there, perhaps he will be kind enough to send me his name and address. Good morning, Mr. Andrews."

"Good morning, Mr. Egerton. I will attend to your wishes," replied the attorney, somewhat dumbfounded. "Obstinate, obstinate," he muttered to himself, as he closed the door after Egerton. "He will never be Sir Henry, if he treats his professional advisers in that way."

After leaving Mr. Andrews, Egerton returned home as fast as a Hansom's cab could carry him. The information he had received, though apparently authentic, was so little in quantity, that a very few words sufficed to place Bertha in possession of the whole case. Her astonishment was no less than his own.

"But Sir William states expressly in his letter that he had married her," said Bertha; "does he not, Henry?"

"That is certainly my impression. But I will look at the letter again," replied Egerton, un-

locking his desk and taking out the document in question.

“Let me see; ah, here it is. ‘Lucia is now mine, mine for ever.’ The words are a little ambiguous it is true, but then he continues further on, ‘If it should be a daughter, then your interests will not suffer much. I hardly know which to hope.’ Why, that sentence would have no meaning if he had not married her! No, William was the soul of honour. I am sure he would never have attempted to rob me of my birthright by a petty equivocation. And then he continues, ‘At any rate I am sure that you will never think hardly of me. Be kind to Lucia and my child, Henry, when I am gone, for they will both sadly need a protector.’ My brother never could have written these words with such a fraud upon his conscience. At all events I shall start for Rome at once. I shall only wait one day that I may get an Austrian visé to my passport; for though I do not know that I shall enter the Austrian dominions, it may still be useful in Italy. But the matter

must be cleared up, and that without loss of time."

"No doubt of it," said Bertha, "What a pity we have already taken our passage! The Falcon is advertised to sail in little more than five weeks from this time."

"That is true, but it will probably be six weeks or rather more before it actually leaves Plymouth. If I allow about a week each way for the journey to Rome and back, I shall have nearly four weeks to stay there, and can still be here in time to sail with her, provided of course, we see no reason to alter our plans."

"Six weeks, Henry! it is a long long time. But you will write very often, dear, will you not?"

"That I will, Bertha. What I am most vexed at is having to leave you for so long, when there are still a great many preparations to make. Now promise me that you will not overdo yourself; Herbert will help you, I am sure. I shall write to him about it from Paris."

"Oh, as for that, I am not at all afraid of the work. We have settled everything so completely that I feel quite equal to it. But I think we must not trouble Herbert just now, as you know he is going to be ordained in a few weeks."

The next morning, when Bertha took leave of her husband at the station, and saw the engine roll off, with its ponderous length of train, her heart was very heavy, but her sorrow was not unmixed with joy. The hurry and anxiety of the last twenty-four hours had left her little time for reflection; but now that Egerton was gone, and she had time to think over the startling intelligence, and the quick resolves to which it had given rise, she felt that he had never been so much to her as now. Was it that her woman's vanity was pleased with the prospect that he might ere long be able to make her Lady Egerton? We think, not, reader—we think not.

CHAPTER X.

"It's mose extrornary," said Mr. Walsingham to his friend Mr. Quickman, as he rolled along the Corso in his new brougham, "it's mose extrornary! Can't make it out at all! Should have thought he'd had more gumption. Why Rivers writes to me that he never sees him at the club, and that he lives in poky lodgings somewhere out by Islington or Southwark, or heaven knows where! Gives lessons, and doesn't even keepa man servant!"

"Always was rather an odd man, that fella Egerton," replied his friend. "Course he ought to have quietly taken possession, and left the

young lady to do her worst. But he always was dam slow."

"An' then to see how Robertson took her up! Positively wanted t'introduce her to my sisters! But I told him at once 'twasn't the sort of thing, you know, 'twouldn't do at all. And now she drives about and looks as proud as if her father had never been a petty tradesman, and her mother taken in needlework."

"She is dam handsome, though, by Jove!" responded Mr. Quickman.

"Well, I don't know. She's not my style, looks too fierce for my taste. Ancles good, but hands too large."

"'Pon my word, shouldn't wonder if Robertson marries her. He'll wait though first, to see how it is about Hebworth."

"Oh, as for that, he knows what he's about. An' if my lady carries it through, you know, she won't be such a verra bad match for him."

"That's all very well, but if he thinks she will ever be received, I rather think he will find himself dam mistaken."

"My mother won't receive her, that's certain," replied Mr. Walsingham. "At least, not until she condescends to produce her marriage certificate."

We have recorded the above short conversation, principally because it affords a striking instance of the mutability of human feelings. Strange to say, only two months previously, Mr. Walsingham had urgently requested Mr. Robertson to introduce him to Lady Egerton, and had expressed his admiration of her beauty in very ardent terms. Mr. Robertson had consented to do so on condition that the introduction should also extend to Mrs. and the Misses Walsingham. Those ladies, however, objected most decidedly to making the acquaintance of Lady Egerton, until her position should be completely ascertained, and the negotiations had thus come to a somewhat abrupt termination, without leading to any other result than a slight coolness between the two gentlemen concerned.

By a curious coincidence the "dam slow" individual, who had been the object of Mr. Quick-

man's animadversions, arrived at Rome at the very moment they were being made. After having partaken of a late dinner in his own room at the Europa Hotel, in the Piazza di Spagna, he proceeded, under the escort of a valet de place, to the residence of a certain Joseph Cutter, solicitor, who lived close by in the Via di Condotti. Mr. Cutter was at home, and Egerton was admitted.

Mr. Cutter was a little man with a bald head, and somewhere about fifty years of age. He had originally established himself in London, but had not succeeded in obtaining much practice. Having, however, had occasion to make a journey to Italy on behalf of one of his very few clients, and finding that there was an opening for an English solicitor, he determined on depriving an ungrateful country of his professional services, and on making wills for those consumptive patients who might choose Italy as the most agreeable place to die in. By this course he had not only contrived to put a little money into his own pockets, but a great deal more into

those of the lawyers in England, into whose hands the management of the estates of the said consumptive clients had subsequently fallen. Such men as Mr. Cutter, if not exactly an ornament, are at least a blessing to their profession, and ought to be regarded with sentiments of the profoundest gratitude by the legal world in general, and Chancery barristers in particular. For if Cobble, the conveyancer of Chancery Lane, had not made that little blunder in the will of old Hobbles, which set all the young Hobbles by the ears directly after their parent's demise, Bobble, the Chancery barrister, of Stone Buildings, would never have had that capital suit, and could never have sent his wife and children to Broadstairs last summer. Thus Cobble's little inadvertency benefits all parties. The young Hobbles have the pleasing excitement of being kept in *hot* water for a few years by a little domestic litigation; while the young Bobbles regain their former strength after the measles by being enabled to bathe in *cold*. But this is a digression.

Mr. Cutter, if not precisely the man to set the Thames on fire (which perhaps was the reason of his migrating to the banks of the Tiber), was both active and honest, two qualities which often enabled him to be very useful to his clients, where great legal knowledge was not required. There was, moreover, one department of his professional duties, which he thoroughly understood. When young ladies with delicate lungs or a passion for art, attained their majority in the Eternal City, many a time had Mr. Cutter superintended the execution of deeds, sent out from England for that purpose. On these occasions he would explain to them the precise seal on which to place their pretty little fingers, and the precise place for writing their dear little names, with a degree of self-confidence, which inspired the young ladies with a profound respect for his legal acquirements, and himself, with a proud consciousness of his professional dignity.

"I have taken the liberty of calling on you, Mr. Cutter," said Egerton, as he entered the

room, "in the hopes that you could give me your assistance in a little business which has just brought me to Rome."

"If there is anything that I can do to further your views in any way, Mr. Egerton, I am sure I shall be only too happy."

"My first object," continued Egerton, "is to learn the facts of the case, with which I am at present only partially acquainted."

"That is unquestionably the proper course, Mr. Egerton."

"My late brother, Sir William Egerton, married an Italian lady about a year and a half ago. He had one son by her and died last summer. Had he left no legitimate child, I should of course have succeeded to his title and estates. But as I never heard till lately that the fact of his marriage had been called in question, I always regarded my young nephew as his successor, and have not taken possession of the property."

"That, I fear, was a mistake," said Mr. Cutter, smiling.

"Quite recently, however, reports have

reached me that many persons doubt whether my brother ever was married, and this, on the grounds of no dispensation having been obtained from the Pope. I also hear that Lady Egerton is not acknowledged by the English families resident at Rome, and that she holds at present a somewhat equivocal position. Now my wish is, to ascertain, in the first place, how much truth there is in this account, and I thought that you would be the person most able to assist me in my enquiries."

"I am much obliged to you for your confidence, Mr. Egerton, but no enquiries will be necessary, as I believe I can give you all the information you require. I am happy to say, moreover, that it is of a character most favourable to your interests. The position and pretensions of that unfortunate young woman, have been the subject of a good deal of scandal lately at Rome, and your delay in assuming your rights, has occasioned some surprise among us. But I should hope that that cannot materially affect the result."

"But the facts, Mr. Cutter, what are the facts?"

"The facts are precisely as you have stated, Mr. Egerton. There is no doubt that this young person lived with Sir William, but that he ever married her, seems highly improbable. No dispensation was obtained from the Pope, so that the marriage cannot have been solemnized by a Catholic priest. Neither is there any trace of its having taken place at any of the British Legations. Besides this, the lady has refused to give any information on the subject, which can only be explained on the supposition of her total inability to do so."

"But she still asserts that she has been married."

"Certainly she does, but who will believe her? I assure you, Mr. Egerton, you are alarming yourself most unnecessarily, if you attach any importance to loose asseverations of that kind. If she had really been married, she could easily have furnished the proofs of it, and her refusal to do so admits of but one interpretation.

Depend upon it, she has no evidence with which to go before a jury; none whatever, sir, positively none, or we should have heard something more about it before this."

"And is that the universal opinion here? Has not a single Englishman taken her part?"

"None that I know of. Oh, yes, one—I had forgotten Mr. Robertson. He would not start for the Holy Land, until he thought he had silenced the scandal. He used to say he *knew* she was married; but except one or two of his intimate friends, nobody really placed much reliance on his statement, unsupported as it was by evidence. It was generally believed that he had a sneaking kindness for the lady himself, and was therefore an interested person."

"It is very unfortunate that Mr. Robertson is absent, as I have very urgent reasons for wishing to get at the bottom of this mystery. I shall call on Lady Egerton to-morrow, but supposing she is as reserved towards me, as towards others, I shall then—"

"Really, my dear sir, I think you are giving

yourself a great deal of unnecessary trouble. The young lady in question cannot possibly—”

“Excuse me, Mr. Cutter, for interrupting you, but I think you do not quite understand the object of my visit to Rome.”

“Perfectly, perfectly, Mr. Egerton. You wish, of course, to establish the fact that no marriage has taken place, and thus to put an end at once to the pretensions of this Italian woman, and secure that the young gentleman shall never rob you of your brother’s estates.”

“Supposing, Mr. Cutter, it were precisely the opposite of all this,” said Egerton, smiling.

The attorney stared at Egerton for a moment in silence. He could hardly believe that he had heard the words correctly. He opened his eyes so very wide that it seemed almost as if his forehead were going to shut up in creases altogether, and never open again. Even as it was, the creases turned round the corner, and produced an undulating surface on the bald, horizontal plane above.

“Why, good Heavens, Mr. Egerton! You

don't mean to tell me you have travelled fifteen hundred miles to cut yourself out of a baronetcy?"

"To vindicate my brother's honour, and protect my brother's widow against insult by acknowledging her as my sister-in-law," replied Egerton.

"To disinherit yourself, and do yourself out of some seven or eight thousand a year," said Mr. Cutter.

"To secure the rights of my brother's widow and her only son," continued Egerton.

The attorney gasped for breath from the mere excess of his astonishment.

"I have heard of people travelling some thousands of miles," he said at last, "for the purpose of inheriting a property, but this is the first time I ever knew a man go fifteen yards to *dis*-inherit himself. It passes my comprehension altogether."

Mr. Cutter's amazement had produced such a very ludicrous effect upon his countenance, that

Egerton was no longer able to repress his amusement. At first Mr. Cutter looked grave. By degrees, however, he relaxed into a smile, and at length the two gentlemen laughed in chorus.

"Ah, I see—I see, my dear sir," said Mr. Cutter. "How could I be so stupid? But really now, is it not sailing rather near the wind? Besides which, the case does not require so much *finesse*. You mean to take up the lady's case before the world, in order, when the proofs of a marriage fail, to be able with all the better grace to—"

"Stop, Mr. Cutter, stop if you please!" exclaimed Egerton, "or you will be wider of the mark than ever you were. Please to understand what I say in the literal sense of the words. I loved my brother dearly. I have the most unquestionable proofs that he regarded Lady Egerton as his wife, and in spite of all the doubts of all the English in Italy or elsewhere, I consider her to have been so myself. My brother is now dead, and I do not mean to leave a stone unturned until I have placed his widow and son in

the position to which I believe them to be legitimately entitled."

"Why, damn it, sir!" cried the little attorney, with a sudden burst of excitement, "damn it, sir!—no, excuse the oath, but I can't help it, I can't upon my honour—you are just one man out of ten thousand—out of ten hundred thousand, and their wives thrown into the bargain. Give me your hand, sir. I can only say that if I can do anything to aid you in your views and keep you out of the baronetcy and estates, you may command my services to any extent. Nay, if it were a dukedom and fifty thousand a year I should say the same. I would, upon my honour. But are you, then, so very certain that there really was a marriage?"

"I have not the smallest doubt of it. Shortly after my brother's death I received a short sketch of the history of his attachment in his own handwriting. Passages occur in it, which, on any other supposition than that a marriage really took place, would render it the most infamous fraud on record. Now, my brother may

have had his weaknesses like the best of us, but he was quite incapable of anything dishonourable. The sole object I propose to myself in establishing the marriage is to vindicate his memory, and to rescue my sister-in-law from her present equivocal position, but not in the least to satisfy myself, for I am quite satisfied already."

"I hope you will excuse me, Mr. Egerton, but—"

"But what, sir?"

"Nay, don't be angry," continued Mr. Cutter, shaking his head doubtfully; "but you see I have lived some time longer in the world than you have, and I have known many cases in which love has induced a man to do things he would have scorned to think of under any other circumstances."

"Almost the same words that Lord Windworth used at our last meeting," thought Egerton to himself.

"I do not expect that the world should see the question in the same light as I do myself,"

replied Egerton, a little stiffly, and a shade paler than before; "but as I knew my brother well, and must act upon my own convictions, the only point before us at present is how to establish the marriage, on the presumption that one really did take place."

"Lady Egerton is the person to assist us in that," replied Mr. Cutter.

"But she has refused to give any information on the subject."

"It is true she has done so to others, but perhaps to her husband's brother she may be more open."

"I will hope so. But it was so much to her own interest to clear her character, that I fear lest the same motives which have induced her to maintain this unaccountable silence to others, will hardly allow of her being more open to myself. At any rate, I will call on her to-morrow. Perhaps I may be able to obtain some clue to the mystery, which we may afterwards be able to follow up with success. And now, Mr. Cutter, as we can settle nothing more this even

ing, and it is getting late, I will take my leave."

"Good evening, Mr. Egerton. I hope you will pardon me if I did not quite enter into your views in the first instance. Good evening, sir."

Egerton left the attorney's house, and strolled home to his hotel. Being somewhat fatigued with his journey, he retired to bed at an unusually early hour; but unfortunately bed and sleep are by no means synonymous terms. Sometimes we go to the latter without going to the former, as, for instance, when good old Dr. Drybore's lectures are more than ordinarily heavy. Still oftener, perhaps, we reverse the process, and then we feel what a boon a few of the doctor's somniferous periods would be. Egerton, on the present occasion, was in the latter predicament. He was physically weary, but the excitement of a first arrival at Rome, and more than all, on such a mission, would not allow him to go to sleep. He tossed about from side to side, and tried to think of nothing—but

alas! in vain. The unaccustomed sounds of strange chimes broke in upon his ear from quarter to quarter, and left him little hope of the unconsciousness he so longed for.

At first the scene, half humorous, half serious, which he had gone through with Mr. Cutter, passed before his mental vision. Mr. Cutter soon gave way to many an anxious thought about poor Bertha. How had she passed the time since he had left her? Might she not, perhaps, have overworked herself in endeavouring to complete the preparations for their voyage, and now be lying ill with none but comparative strangers to tend her? And then he thought of their future hard life in New Zealand, and the great contrast it would offer to the luxury of Oakwood. Oh, if Sir Roderick had but made that codicil to his will, and left him a single farm! How different would have been poor Bertha's fate then—how different his own! And then Lord Windworth's doubts and their echo from Mr. Cutter flashed across his mind. "Love plays strange tricks

with a man's conscience." His brother had himself confessed to an intensity of feeling of which he had hardly deemed his nature capable. Was it not just possible that that brother had fallen? That, enervated by disease and distracted by fears for the fate of one whom he loved so passionately, he had forgotten for an instant those high principles of honour which had seemed like a part of his existence! "Oh, William, William," he exclaimed, "God forgive me such dark thoughts! No, it cannot be. I should lose faith in all that is highest and noblest, could I ever lose it in your honour!" He felt indignant with himself for having harboured such a suspicion for a moment. And yet—do what he would—it would return. Lady Egerton had the strongest motives to prove her marriage, and—she was silent. If she were not indeed his brother's widow, how great was the wrong he was inflicting on Bertha! Was she not as much to him as Lady Egerton had ever been to his brother? Was it not a false and exaggerated view of duty to condemn to the

hardships of a settler's life a wife he loved so dearly—a wife, too, born to affluence which she had forfeited for his sake—merely to give a comparative stranger the position to which she refused to prove her claim? Surely his duties to Bertha must take precedence of those he owed to his brother's widow. Besides, were Hebworth his, how many schemes of practical benevolence he would be able to carry out, which now, alas! would never be realized. What a glorious sphere of activity he was about to sacrifice to an idea which all the world would regard as the purest Quixotism. And would the world be wrong? Would he even be justified in throwing away the power for good which seemed thus unexpectedly thrust upon him? Hebworth during a long minority, with little or nothing done for the neighbourhood, while Bertha and himself were the tenants of a log hut in New Zealand, or Hebworth his, and all the good which he meant those words should contain! What a contrast! And yet, perhaps, that choice now lay before him. But he had

not much time for deliberation. The final decision must be made quickly.

Such were the thoughts that passed and repassed in rapid succession through Egerton's mind during the long watches of the night. He heard the clock strike four. His head was hot, and his temples throbbed. He could not sleep. To remain in bed was useless.

He rose, and having dressed himself, stole quietly down the broad staircase of the hotel, and woke the porter. In another minute he was in the open street. The fresh air cooled his brow, and the first glimpse of the starry vault above him seemed already to raise his thoughts to a higher tone, and to give an earnest of a truer insight into the question that involved such deep consequences for himself and others. He heeded little where he went. It was enough that he was in Rome—the city which more than any other seemed to bridge over the gulph between the present and the distant past, and whose every stone could tell of heroic deeds or great crimes. With the heavens above his head,

and Rome around him, God present in nature manifest in the one, God present in history manifest in the other, he felt himself secured, as in a panoply of faith, against any low view of life and its duties.

He hurried along the Via de Condotti with a rapid step, and turned to the left as soon as he had reached the corso. A few minutes walk brought him to the Piazza Colonna. For an instant he paused to gaze at the Antonine Column, with its spiral bas-reliefs, as it shone in the broad moonlight, but his mind was far too full to allow of his staying to examine it more minutely, and again he hurried on. Caring little where he went, he resigned the direction of his walk to chance. Indeed, he could not have proposed to himself any particular object if he had wished it, for he did not know his way; and except an occasional patrol, no other footsteps than his own now broke the silence of the sleeping city. Shortly after passing along the side of a small square, he observed that the street became narrower and less regular than

before; and as it did not seem to promise much of interest, he struck down a turning to the right. The street curved slightly to the left, and when, after a few minutes, he had reached its termination, he found himself at the foot of two flights of steps. The nearest was steep, and seemed to lead to a church, while the other, which was inclined at a small angle to it, was so gradual in its ascent as to be little more than an inclined plane. Two lionesses in basalt at the foot seemed to guard the approach, while two colossal figures, of youths holding horses, adorned the summit of the stairs. He ascended them with a quick step, and found himself in a square with a fine equestrian statue in its centre. There was a palace facing him, and a palace on either side. He gazed around him in admiration—and still more in wonder, for a dim recollection of the spot stole over his memory, as if he had visited it years long past in some dream of his childhood. By degrees, the images awakened in his mind assumed a distinct form, and he recognized the solution of the mystery in

an old engraving in a black wooden frame, that had hung over the mantelpiece of the nursery at Hebworth. 'Il Campideglio Romano' were the words beneath it. "Yes—it must be the Capitol."

"The Capitol! Why the Forum must be near." The mere name made his pulse beat quicker. He crossed the square, and descending the road on his right, the Temple of Jupiter Tonans, or rather the three columns which alone mark its ancient site, the Column of Phocus, and the Arch of Septimus Severus met his view. Other ruins of the grandeur of those olden days lay scattered around—but he heeded them not, for he had caught a glimpse of a dark mass cutting the dim outline of the distant Apenines, which now engrossed all his thoughts. Hurrying along the Via Sacra, and passing through the Arch of Titus, he stood before the Coliseum.

Egerton paused for a few moments, and then throwing himself on the ground, where a slight inequality in the surface afforded a convenient

resting-place, abandoned himself to the contemplation of the scene before him.

“The Colisseum! The grandest monument of antiquity was built by man for the torture of his fellows! It was a strange unconscious irony that made him associate beasts with men as the objects of his greed of blood!

“And yet its founders were two of the best Emperors Rome ever boasted! Curious—very curious. No doubt when they examined the various plans and counted the cost, and calculated which of them would enable the greatest number of human beings to gaze upon the ghastly upturned eye, the gaping wound, the quivering nerve, the torture, and the death-agony—no doubt they thought they were doing a noble work! Curious—very curious.

“How deep the shadows are within the arches! They seem to typify the crimes that have been perpetrated within that bloody arena. But all is not dark. There is a light side as well as a dark one. If it is a monument of the cruelty of a barbarous age, it is also a monument of its

energy and courage, and, more than all, of the heroism and faith of a whole army of martyrs.

“‘The world passeth away and the lust thereof.’ Nowhere are those characters more deeply traced than on yon vast ruin. But ‘he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.’ And yet, perhaps, those heathen Emperors thought they were doing it when they directed the labour of thousands to the furtherance of sin!

“‘It shall stand for ever!’ they said in their hearts. Little did they deem that a Jewish peasant had already laid the foundation of another structure whose arches were to span the world, while yon vast pile, massive as their pride had fashioned it, was doomed to moulder to decay under the silent hand of time. Yes! Another architect than he who received the Imperial Vespasian’s mandate had appeared before those stones had left their quarry. But he took Faith, and Hope, and Charity for his materials, and Truth for his foundation, and, God be praised! they have proved more durable than the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life,

which made yon grim arches ring with their unhallowed utterance.

"I see it now," he exclaimed, starting to his feet. "I see it now. We must not trust to the calculations of our intellect alone, for the interpretation of God's will, for they can rarely penetrate through the murky atmosphere of the errors of the age in which we live. We must trust to our highest, noblest impulses for our truest views of duty, and leave the result to Him.

"Ah, the rising sun has just cast its first glow upon the upper arches. Thank God! the light has come at last."

As Egerton retraced his steps to his hotel, the dark doubts of the preceding night, and the casuistry to which they had given rise, seemed to vanish like a bad dream before the breaking dawn. Hebworth his indeed! It never had been—never could be his. His brother, who had been the soul of honour, to stoop to a low mean fraud! A deep feeling of sorrow and humiliation brought the colour to his cheeks,

when he remembered that he had listened to the unworthy suspicion, though only for a moment. However inexplicable her silence might be, Lady Egerton *was* his brother's widow—his own sister, he doubted it no longer. No mere estimate of the good he could effect at Hebworth, no conceivable amount of adult schools or mechanics' institutes could ever touch the question of her rights and his duties. He would vindicate his brother's honour to the world—he would protect those whom his brother held dearest. The fit was gone, and he was himself again.

CHAPTER XI.

IN a comfortable apartment in the Via Babuina, a young Italian lady was sitting on a sofa, engaged in altering some small article of child's apparel. She was dressed in the deepest widow's mourning, and to judge by the settled melancholy which gave an almost painful expression to features otherwise beautiful, the grief of her great bereavement still weighed heavily on her heart. Nearly a year, indeed, had elapsed since she had followed her husband to the grave, but she had loved him with the *abandon* of a true daughter of the South, and

would have regarded any attempt to check the full tide of her sorrow, as a slight offered to his memory. Her short life had been a chequered one, but the brightest spots which illumined the memory of the past, were all associated with him she mourned. It was no wonder, therefore, that while her fingers plied the needle mechanically, her thoughts were buried with the scene of that short interval of happiness which formed such a striking contrast to the gnawing cares of the months immediately preceding it.

Her only child, a little boy of about fifteen months of age, was sleeping in a corner of the sofa beside her. Ever and anon she looked up from her work, and gazed at the little face with an expression in which the joy of a mother's love seemed mingled with far different feelings.

"They would rob you of your birthright, my baby boy, my own Roderick!" she exclaimed at length, her eyes flashing with indignation as she spoke. "With God's aid I will defend it yet. They are haughty, unjust, cruel. They refuse to believe my word because I cannot support it

by proofs. What right have they to ask for them? Even if I could, I should disdain to answer their insulting doubts. They seem to think an Englishman could never feel a pure and honorable love for a woman of a lower station, and assume that I must have been his mistress, not his wife. They judge of others by their own cold, selfish natures. Oh, that *he* had been of any other nation, that I might have cursed them in my heart! They a people honoring liberty and justice, indeed! I fear that my Roderick must live amongst them; but I will take care that he shall never forget that Italy was his native land. Yes, I fear he must be educated among them; cold and heartless as they are! It is a bitter thought."

The passion with which she had spoken the last few sentences awoke the child, and her soliloquy was interrupted by its beginning to cry. She caught it up, and pressing it to her bosom, walked up and down the room in the hope of hushing it to sleep again; but in vain. She paused before a portrait of her husband.

"Papa, baby—say papa," she said, pointing to the picture.

The child's attention was attracted. It repeated the word, and for a few moments ceased to cry. But the charm was soon over, and it would no longer allow itself to be comforted so easily.

At this instant a servant entered the room, and placed a card in her hand. She glanced at it hastily, and the blood mantled in her cheeks, as she read the name of her husband's brother. She felt that she was approaching a crisis in her fate. Had he come to rob her boy of his rights? Had he come to claim those rights for himself, or to acknowledge her as a sister, and protect her from insult? She dared not hope it.

Summoning up all her powers of self-command and assuming a calmness she was far from feeling, she laid the card on the table, and told the servant to admit the bearer.

Egerton entered the room, and hurried towards his sister with the intention of taking her hand. But when he had approached to within

a few paces, and saw her slim, but tall and queenly figure, drawn up to its full height, and the look of defiance which flashed from her dark eyes, he paused, and for an instant the brother and sister gazed at each other without speaking.

Egerton felt so chilled by this reception, that he could not immediately recover his presence of mind, and the lady was the first to break the silence.

"Mr. Egerton," she said at length, "may I ask if this is intended as a visit to your brother's widow?"

"To his widow, and my sister, Lady Egerton, but partly also to my young nephew there, who seems determined not to be forgotten."

Lady Egerton advanced, and seizing her brother's hand, looked into his face, as though she would read his inmost thoughts.

"You are like *him*," she said, after a moment's pause, "I know you *must* be true. Forgive me but—but—"

Lady Egerton raised her brother's hand to her lips, and burst into tears. He led her gently to the sofa, and then, in order to give her time to recover herself, directed his attentions to his infant nephew.

The little fellow was still crying, but with the aid of his watch and a little coaxing, his uncle soon succeeded in pacifying him; and in a few moments the most friendly relations were established between them.

"I have come to Rome," said Egerton, taking a chair near his sister, as soon as he saw that she had partially recovered her composure, "I have come to Rome in the hopes of being able to render you some little assistance. I heard that you had had some sources of annoyance lately, and thought that you would allow me a brother's prerogative of offering you the protection of which I fear you stand in need."

"It is very, very good of you," she replied, as the tears again started to her eyes. "I shall never forgive myself for having doubted for a moment, the generosity of a brother whom *he*

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loved so dearly. But I have suffered so much of late, from the unworthy suspicions of others, that—but you will forgive me, will you not?”

Egerton remembered the thoughts of the preceding night, as he lay on his sleepless couch, and he blushed at the recollection that he stood quite as much in need of forgiveness as she who now sought it of him.

“It was quite natural, my dear sister,” he replied, that you should regard my visit at first with some little suspicion, but now that we quite understand each other, we will talk no more about it. There are one or two things of importance on which I wished for some information from you; but I daresay, you would prefer postponing our conversation for a day or two, when, perhaps you will feel more equal to it.”

“That child’s interests are concerned,” she eagerly replied, pointing to the little cot in which Egerton had just laid him, “and I am his mother. The sooner you can aid me to wipe away the stain that false and cruel slanderers have cast

on his birth and my honour, the better for both of us."

"I am very glad to hear you say so, for it is of the utmost importance that my stay in Rome should be as limited as possible. Now you must fully understand that my motive in asking you for the particulars of your marriage, is not to satisfy myself, for I do not entertain the slightest doubt that you were my brother's lawful wife; indeed he has himself told me as much in the last letter I received from him. But in order to meet the doubts of others, it is necessary that I should have some more powerful argument than my own conviction. Do not therefore take the question unkindly, if I ask you where you were married, and by whom; or what documents you possess to prove the fact?"

Lady Egerton shook her head mournfully.

"I do not doubt the kindness of your motives for an instant," she replied, "but I cannot satisfy you on this point. Indeed I cannot."

"Do you mean that it is literally out of your

power, or that there are insuperable objections in the way?"

"I mean that the interests of others are too deeply involved to allow of my giving you the information you desire."

"That is unfortunate, very unfortunate," replied Egerton, much disappointed. "I am quite at a loss to know how to help you. Would it then be dangerous for you to confide the circumstances of your marriage to me, if I gave you my honour not to reveal them to any other person?"

"That would be of no avail, Mr. Egerton, as your only object is to be able to prove the marriage to the world."

"On the contrary, I think it is all that would be necessary. At present I can only meet an insulting doubt by asserting my own firm conviction. But if I could add that I *knew* a marriage had taken place, for that I had seen the proofs, I should be in a far better position. No man could then presume to regard you in any other light than my poor brother's widow,

without casting a doubt on my veracity, and thus making the quarrel personal to myself."

"I see, I see," she cried. "You must give me a little time to think."

Lady Egerton lent back in her chair, and covering her face with her hands, seemed completely absorbed in an attempt to solve the problem which Egerton's suggestions had presented to her conscience.

"I would not urge you to do anything you consider wrong, my dear sister," he said at length, "but I think you should remember that you have duties to yourself, and my young nephew, as well as—"

"I feel I may trust you," she said, interrupting him. "I will tell you all. But you promise me never to reveal it?"

"I promise."

"That is enough. Well, then, when I consented to become William's wife, he told me that there were certain family reasons which made it absolutely necessary that our marriage should remain a secret, at any rate for a time. Of course

I regretted this, but I loved him too well to throw any impediments in the way of our union, and agreed. But then a new difficulty arose. As your brother was a Protestant, no Catholic priest would marry us unless we first obtained a dispensation from the Pope, and it would have been impossible to apply for one without making too many persons acquainted with our intentions. The next plan that suggested itself was, that we should be married by an English clergyman at some other place, Turin, or Naples, for instance. But William said that would be equally objectionable, as the English residents would be sure to know of it, and the news might reach his father within a month after the ceremony had taken place. We were now in despair. I once threw out a hint of my position to my confessor. He answered that to marry a heretic for the sake of a mere earthly affection would be a great sin, but that I might perhaps make William's love a means of inducing him to enter the only true church, and thus recover a lost soul. But I knew William better than he did. Such

an attempt would have been fruitless. At last it occurred to me to apply to a certain priest named Polidori, an old friend of our family, who had a cure at Trieste. He had entered the church in consequence of the death of my eldest sister, to whom he had been deeply attached; and, as he had taken a great interest in our family ever since, I thought that perhaps he might be induced to do for me what he would not do for any other. I wrote to him a full account of all the circumstances, and entreated him to take pity on us. I shall never forget the intense anxiety with which we awaited his answer. At last it came, and—dispelled our last hope, for he refused to marry us unless we first obtained a dispensation.”

Lady Egerton seemed quite overcome by some painful recollections, and paused for a few minutes. Egerton did not wish to hurry her in any way, and waited patiently till she felt inclined to resume her narrative.

“I have come to a very humiliating part of my story, Mr. Egerton,” she continued, after a

short interval, and blushing deeply, "but do not judge me before you have considered how sorely I was tempted. I saw your brother's pale, anxious face, I knew how much he was suffering, and I suffered no less myself, for I loved him as ardently as he did me. Though Polidori's refusal was kindly expressed, it was decided, and it seemed quite useless to write again. A few days after receiving it, a plan suddenly presented itself to my mind, by which I thought I might overcome his objections. I determined to write to him once more, but this time without William's knowledge, for other reasons which will readily suggest themselves, as also because I would not make him a party to the deceit I contemplated. I wrote, and told him—that—that—in short, that his refusal came too late, and implored him, by the love he had once borne my dead sister, not to allow me to become an object of the world's scorn. Heaven forgive me for that lie, a lie by which I slandered my own good name. The result was that Polidori relented; but only after I had promised to do all

in my power to screen him from the evil consequences of his act, by keeping the circumstances of my marriage secret. We went to Trieste, and were married privately, the necessary witnesses being strangers to both of us, and not knowing that my husband was a Protestant. Polidori behaved exactly as if he had never entertained any suspicion of the fact, and the marriage was duly entered in the church books."

"Then the sole object of your silence has been to avoid compromising Polidori?"

"Exactly so. The discipline of the church is very strict in such matters, and were it to be known that he had solemnized a marriage between a Catholic and a heretic without a dispensation, the consequences would be very serious."

"I shall leave Rome for Trieste to-morrow," said Egerton, "and shall be very much obliged if you will give me a few lines by way of introduction to Polidori."

"Is that necessary? Why do you want to see

Polidori? He can only confirm what I have told you already, or at least as much as he knows himself, for I have never undeceived him respecting the deceit I practised to secure his assistance."

"My only object is to obtain access to the church books with as little trouble and delay as possible. Until I have examined them I cannot say that I have seen the proofs of the marriage, and that is indispensable to enable me to silence all the gossipings of ill-natured people."

"But then the English here will be sure to know of your journey to Trieste, and—"

"I shall have my passport viséd for Venice, and shall then cross over to Trieste by the steamer, and return in a couple of days. I shall thence proceed to Ancona, and afterwards strike down southwards to Naples, without touching Rome, so that the whole journey will set the conjectures of our kind busy bodies here completely at fault."

"But will your time allow of all this?"

"I must find the time somehow. By quick

travelling I may be back again in Rome in little more than three weeks. But I must not waste any more time in talking about it, as I have got to see about my passport. Good bye. God bless you and my little nephew there, whom you must kiss for me as soon as he wakes!"

"Oh, how much trouble you have for—"

"Never mind the trouble. I shall enjoy the scamper through Italy above all things. Besides," added Egerton laughing, "I shall be able to write a book about the customs and manners of the Italians. Send the letter for Polidori to the Europa this afternoon. When we next see each other, I trust I shall have an answer ready for all the Quickmans and Walsinghams in Rome or elsewhere. Good bye."

After leaving his sister, Egerton proceeded to Mr. Cutter's office. His promise of secrecy put it out of his power to gratify that gentleman's curiosity to any great extent. He assured him, however, that Lady Egerton had completely satisfied him both as to the fact of the marriage, as well as the propriety of her own conduct in re-

fusing to enter into any particulars respecting it. He left Mr. Cutter at full liberty to repeat the substance of their conversation to his friends and acquaintances, a permission of which Mr. Cutter availed himself to such good purpose that in the course of twenty-four hours it was known to one half of the English in Rome, and to the other half in twenty-four more. Egerton gave Mr. Cutter no time for asking embarrassing questions, and excused the shortness of his visit on the grounds of the preparations he had to make for a hasty tour through Italy.

"Mose extrornary thing ever knew in my life!" said Mr. Walsingham to Mr. Quickman, as they were returning from church, three days after Egerton's interview with his sister. "Mose extrornary—positively! That a man should come out to Rome to take up the cudgels for his brother's mistress, and do himself out of eight thousand a year!"

"Cutter may say what he likes, I don't believe it," replied his friend. "Depen upon it, there's something behind. I believe it is only a dam

rouse de gare. I'd bet any man he don't acknowledge her after all."

"Gad though, no. I think he's honest. Come, I'll take you. Suppose you give me four to two in ponies?"

"Well, I don't know. I think two to one is as high as I care to go."

"Done," replied Mr. Walsingham.

Oh! Mr. Quickman, was that little transaction quite prudent, sir, considering the extent to which you had overdrawn your account lately? But repentance came too late. A little more than three weeks afterwards, as the friends were walking along the Corso, what was it that made Mr. Walsingham's eyes sparkle with exultation, while Mr. Quickman's cheeks were blanched with fear? The object that produced the different mental states indicated by these outward signs, was not so very extraordinary in itself, nothing more than Mr. Hiller, the English Consul, on horseback, stopping to speak to a lady and gentleman who were taking a drive in an open carriage.

"It's no *roose de gare* after all," groaned Mr. Quickman.

"How about my four ponies?" chuckled his friend.

"No, no! I say, though, hang it, only two."

"Ah, well, perhaps it is."

Three days after this there was a little *soirée* at the Consul's house. Egerton was there, as also his sister-in-law, who seemed to be regarded as one of the principal guests. Mr. Hiller told several of his friends in the course of the evening that Egerton had seen the proofs of Lady Egerton's marriage, and that he, Mr. Hiller, could only consider it as the height of bad taste to pretend to doubt it any longer. We have heard on good authority that on two several occasions Mr. Walsingham was seen to rush forward to relieve Lady Egerton of her cup; that his sister offered to lend her one of Dickens' novels; and further, that Mr. Quickman brought her an ice. Indeed, both gentlemen were unremitting in their attentions, and Mr. Quickman

gazed at his whiskers in the glass that evening with a deeper tenderness than he had ever felt before. Egerton talked with great interest of his little trip to Naples, which seemed to have put Venice and Trieste quite out of his head. At any rate he did not mention them. The next morning he was on the road to London, and Lady Egerton's table was covered with cards.

CHAPTER XII.

It is an old saying that misfortunes never come single, and its truth received some confirmation from the experience of an old acquaintance of ours, for after Mr. Campbell had withdrawn his business from Mr. Walker, the world did not smile on that gentleman. More than one of his clients in Stonecombe and the neighbourhood had discovered certain little eccentricities in the manner in which he had managed their affairs, and had deemed it prudent to follow Mr. Campbell's example. The above circumstances may perhaps account for an advertisement which ap-

peared in the county paper about this time. It stated that a highly desirable family mansion, situated in the best part of Stonecombe, consisting of fourteen rooms, spacious offices, coach-house, and stable, with a pump of the best spring water, admirably adapted for culinary purposes, was then for sale, the further particulars to be obtained of Mr. Walker, solicitor. We did not feel inclined to invest money in house property at that moment, and made no inquiries respecting the mansion in question; but as Mr. Walker removed shortly afterwards to a far more humble dwelling in a small back street, we are disposed to believe that the advertisement above mentioned referred to his own residence.

There is another slight circumstance connected with Mr. Walker's private life which deserves a casual mention. It has been seen in a former chapter that out of regard to the personal appearance which he considered necessary for a man in his social position, he had transferred his custom from Mrs. Brady's pleasant spoken niece, Susan, to a more successful rival of that young

lady, and had sent his linen by railway to London. The retrenchment which his fallen fortunes had now rendered necessary, made this practice rather too expensive, and Susan was accordingly reinstated in her former functions. Instead, however, of her merely paying him a weekly visit, it would appear that few days elapsed in which some important question respecting the stiffness of the collars, or a failing shirt button, did not make a personal interview necessary. Whether Mr. Walker recited Wordsworth to her at these meetings, or used any other arts of blandishment, we cannot now say with certainty; but we have ample evidence for asserting that she found them exceedingly trying to her feelings. It would further appear that Mrs. Brady entertained suspicions of a nature unfavourable to Susan's character, and on one occasion gave vent to her indignation in bitter reproaches.

Susan could not altogether deny the soft impeachment, but being a young woman of spirit, replied with some acrimony, that if her aunt had

hung over those pink bantams in the wash tub, as she had done for hours together, she would also have yielded to their fascination, and mingled her tears with the suds. The blue pointers, perhaps she could have stood; but the bantams! No, that was a different thing.

It was at this juncture, and probably at the suggestion of Mrs Brady, that another person stepped forward as Susan's champion. This was no other than her brother, an amazingly plucky little journeyman carpenter, who stood four feet eleven in his shoes. He called on Mr. Walker, used rather decided language respecting the honour of his family, and hinted that he might feel it his painful duty to break every bone in the attorney's body, if he did not enter immediately into a matrimonial alliance with his too susceptible sister.

The last mentioned argument could of course have exercised no influence on a man of Mr. Walker's well-known personal courage, and we must therefore conclude that he was listening to the nobler, and more generous impulses of his

heart when he led Susan to the hymeneal altar, and duly installed her as Mrs. John Walker. No very long period elapsed before that lady presented her husband with a son and heir. There is a slight ambiguity connected with the original documents to which we are indebted for the dates of these events; but the carelessness of those registrars is really abominable, and if they were indicted for a nuisance, it would be no more than they deserve.

The reader will probably remember that Mr. Walker at one time had entertained matrimonial intentions in favour of Miss Campbell, and that he had endeavoured to enforce his suit by adopting a menacing tone towards her father. We may now mention our suspicions that he hoped to attain some private end by addressing a similar style of argument towards Mr. Campbell's brother. So much, at least, is certain: that he had repeated interviews with Mr. Edward Campbell; that on several occasions his voice was heard by the Vicar's servants, apparently in angry altercation with their master, and that his parting

words at their last meeting were the same as those he had employed towards Mr. Campbell, namely that he would make the old parson repent it, a declaration which he accompanied by an oath.

Whether Mr. Walker ever seriously intended any attack on the Vicar's person or property, cannot now be determined with certainty, as he left Stonecombe only two days after he had uttered the above-mentioned threat. The circumstances under which he undertook this journey, were briefly as follows:—

In spite of Mr. Walker's repeated experience that autographs only get a man into a mess, they appear to have exercised a most unaccountable fascination over his mind. Sometimes, however, our friends object to giving us their autographs, and evince the greatest repugnance to signing their names to very simple little documents, to which we ourselves should attach much value. Mr. Walker was aware of this little weakness, and not wishing to trouble a certain rich inhabitant of Hilderton with any fruitless importunity, had employed some of his leisure hours in imita-

ting his hand writing. One of these autographs came accidentally into the possession of the said rich inhabitant of Hilderton, who being a man of a coarse, worldly mind, did not regard the highly artistic imitation of his signature from a purely æsthetic point of view, but actually placed himself in communication with the police. Now in the first outbreak of his most unreasonable indignation, the rich Hildertonian had imprudently expressed himself in disrespectful language touching Mr. Walker's failings, and that, moreover, in the presence of his clerk, whose first cousin held a similar responsible situation in Mr. Walker's office. The result was that Mr. Walker obtained very early information of the Hildertonian's unfriendly intentions towards him, and wishing to avoid any little unpleasantness, considered it advisable to absent himself from Stonecombe.

Exactly twenty-four hours after he had reached Liverpool, a constable called at his office, but heard from the clerk that Mr. Walker had just started for Norwich, but would probably

return in a couple of days. The telegraph was immediately put in requisition, and messages were sent both to London and Norwich, but without leading to any satisfactory result. Through the activity of the police, however, accurate information was at length obtained of Mr. Walker's proceedings. The only difficulty in acting upon it arose from the trifling circumstance that at the moment the clue was complete, Mr. Walker was leaning over the side of an American steamer, repeating between the intervals of a temporary indisposition those well-known lines of his favorite poet Byron!

"O'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
Our hopes as boundless, and ourselves as free."

We should be sorry to be guilty of any injustice to Mr. Walker, and must therefore explain that his motives for this little trip took their rise in an almost morbid conscientiousness. For several months past he had looked forward to emigration in some form or other as the career to which his destiny was leading him. Now he

was well aware that had he remained in Stonecombe, the government would probably have paid the expenses of his passage, besides finding him employment in his new home. This, however, would have been an attention on the part of a grateful country which he could not reconcile it to his conscience to accept.

"How much more honorable," he argued to himself, "to relieve the government of all anxiety respecting my future career, and with the proceeds of the little autographs of my friend at Hilderton, to pay my own way like a man!"

Ah! these are the sentiments to cheer the heart of the philanthropist, and make him think more highly of human nature!

The reader perhaps might have considered us justified in leaving the subsequent fortunes of Mr. Walker to his imagination, but we could not have justified this course to ourselves. Intimately acquainted as we were with that gentleman's character, we felt convinced that his further exploits would furnish a paragraph for that interesting chapter in the world's history—

Genius in the pursuit of money under difficulties. We accordingly determined to shun no expense of time and capital that might be necessary for our researches, and with the kind assistance of Her Majesty's Consuls in various parts of the world, which we beg hereby gratefully (may we not add, gracefully?) to acknowledge, have succeeded in ascertaining the following particulars respecting Mr. Walker's subsequent proceedings.

On his arrival in New York, it would appear that Mr. Walker delivered a course of three lectures on the History of the Languages and Literature of the World from the earliest period to the present day, in which the striking analogies between Coptic, the language of the aborigines of New Zealand, and the palimpsests in the cuneiform character lately found among the Esquimaux, were more especially considered. These lectures were numerous attended, and evinced so much of the peculiar genius alluded to above, as to attract the attention of the great American showman, Mr. Darnum.

That gentleman went so far as to solicit a personal interview with Mr. Walker, but unfortunately without result. What passed between them on that occasion we have never been able to learn, but at its conclusion Mr. Darnum was heard to observe to a friend, that he had duties to the public which he regarded as paramount to every other consideration, and that his conscience would not permit him to enter into any transactions with so great a humbug as Mr. Walker. This we can only regard as an expectoration of jealousy, and as a proof of Mr. Walker's genius rather than the reverse.

The money which Mr. Walker obtained for these lectures enabled him to send to England for his wife: but what his next proceedings were we cannot state with absolute certainty. Six months afterwards, however, the inhabitants of San Francisco, in California, were astonished one fine morning by seeing enormous placards on every wall, intimating that the Chevalier de Promener, Professor of Magic, and Great Wi-

zard of the World, had recently arrived from Paris, and would exhibit his most surprising performances every evening at seven o'clock. A general programme of the entertainment was annexed, at the end of which it appeared that the Chevalier *fera Madame de Promener disparaître*. We cannot vouch for it as a fact, but we entertain a very strong suspicion, that the lady, whose miraculous disappearance from under the pasteboard extinguisher produced such a great sensation among the diggers, bore a very striking resemblance to Mrs. Brady's relative, the pleasant-spoken Susan.

Mr. Walker must have a great taste for travelling, for the next public appearance of that gentleman, of which we have been enabled to obtain any authentic information, was on the race-course at Melbourne. He here endeavoured to relieve the diggers of the cares attendant upon superfluous wealth, by the simple expedient of setting up a table for the well-known and innocent recreation of thimble-rig. Some of the gentlemen, however, who tried

their luck in that interesting game, were not altogether satisfied with the results, and having smashed the table, playfully broke its legs on Mr. Walker's back. This treatment was painful to Mr. Walker's feelings in every sense of the word, and he accordingly sailed by the first vessel for Adelaide. Thimblorig having proved a dangerous occupation, he commenced the preparation and sale of that delicious beverage, called ginger-beer, which he now retails at that port, to the great refreshment of his customers and profit of himself. His chief hopes for the future, however, are centred in his only son, now a boy of three years old, whom he has been teaching to stand on his head, with every prospect of shortly producing him as the phenomenon of the age.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE total cessation of intercourse between Oakwood and the Vicarage cast a deep gloom over the inmates of both. Sunday after Sunday during that long dreary autumn and succeeding winter did the Vicar direct his eyes to his brother's pew as he entered the reading desk, in the faint hope of seeing Mary in her accustomed place, if not her father; but, alas! the pew was always empty, and only served to remind the congregation of the bitter feud that kept it so.

The spring came at length, but brought with

it no change in the relations of the brothers. Another change, however, had become most painfully visible to the eyes of the parishioners, namely, that in the appearance of their beloved pastor. His face was thinner and paler than before, his step less firm as he mounted the pulpit stairs, and his voice weaker and less distinct. All remarked that he was ageing fast, and that a few months had produced on his frame the effects of years. In a small place like Stonecombe it was impossible that the principal cause of the Vicar's sufferings should remain long a secret, and many a bitter comment was passed on the conduct of the proud proprietor of Oakwood Hall. A general feeling of indignation had in short diffused itself amongst the inhabitants, and much as the Vicar regretted it, he could not help seeing that the great majority of his flock had taken up his cause with all the zeal of partizans. Some of his most ardent admirers even went so far as to contemplate presenting him with some token of their gratitude for his long services among them. But

as he was privately informed that it was also intended as a public demonstration of their sympathy with himself, and their disapprobation of his brother's conduct, he would not hear of such a thing for a moment. He thanked them for the kindness of their intentions, observed that the unhappy difference between himself and his brother was of a strictly private character, and added that any such step as the one they proposed would only add fuel to the fire, and render the reconciliation he so earnestly prayed for, more difficult than ever.

There was, however, another cause of the Vicar's declining health, of which not even his most intimate friends entertained the slightest suspicion. Shortly after Mr. Walker had employed the menacing language to Mr. Campbell, which we have recounted in a previous chapter, he had called on the Vicar, and endeavoured to obtain his consent to certain propositions, which he represented as being for their mutual benefit. He repeated these visits at short intervals, and was never refused admittance, but the whole

power of his eloquence was wholly ineffectual to gain the Vicar to his views. He then employed threats; threats, moreover, which the Vicar believed he had the power of carrying into effect. Mr. Edward Campbell entreated, but Mr. Walker was obdurate, and seeing his advantage in this conflict with the simple-minded, unworldly clergyman, pursued it with a degree of energy which left his adversary no rest. Days of anxious thought were followed by sleepless nights, and the constant wear and tear upon his spirits arising from all these various sources of annoyance were more than the old man's health could sustain. Towards the end of the spring he became so poorly as to be incapacitated for performing the Sunday duty, and he was accordingly obliged to solicit the assistance of a neighbouring clergyman. This, however, would only be necessary for a couple of Sundays, as Herbert was going to be ordained immediately, and would then officiate as his father's curate.

And what were Mr. Campbell's reflections at this time? Bertha, the daughter in whom,

perhaps, he had felt the greatest pride, had left him never to return. Bitter as were the comments on her conduct to which he would occasionally give utterance, he knew in his heart that her disobedience to his commands was the just reward of his cruelty both to herself and Egerton, and the thought goaded him to madness. The punishment in itself was not a little severe, but the consciousness of having deserved it, together with the circumstance of its having been inflicted by one whom he had always regarded as entirely subject to his despotic will, mortified his pride beyond his powers of endurance. He had loved his brother dearly, and the idea that perhaps he might die at enmity with one so affectionate and true, enmity, moreover, entirely of his own seeking, would sometimes fill his soul with horror. But then he remembered that by the contemptuous rejection of all his brother's overtures, he had himself made a reconciliation impossible, except at the price of his own humiliation—a price which his pride would never allow him to pay.

Mary alone, of all who had been so dear to him, was still ever ready by her unwearying love to soothe his irritation, and divert his mind from those cankering thoughts which, if indulged in, must end in the loss of his reason. But every time he gazed upon her pallid cheek and hollow eye, and remembered that the silent grief which was gnawing at her young heart was all his own doing, her very affection seemed like a reproach. In whatever direction he looked, it seemed as if for him all peace had left the earth. He had great possessions—all sources of happiness that wealth could command were his—but peace was not among them. The very luxuries with which he was surrounded, added poignancy to his remorse. But, alas! it was not followed by the repentance which alone could heal the wound. On the contrary, remorse had hardened his pride—had embittered his resentment. Ever and anon he would mutter to himself the grounds of his justification; but then conscience would arise and tear down the flimsy veil, and display his conduct in its true colours. He felt

his health and strength declining—he knew that in a few short years, at latest, the grave would close over his mouldering body, but he shuddered when he asked himself what would be the fate of his sinful soul. Would God have mercy on it, when he himself had shown none to others?

And why did he not turn to Him whose aid alone could save him? Simply because he had another god—another religion. It is true, in former times he had attended regularly at the small parish church, but the God who was worshipped there was a far different being to the idol he had set up in his own heart on the pedestal of his pride, and had worshipped from his youth. That idol was his own will—his religion was faith in its behests—his only sacrifice, that of his nobler and truer impulses, when demanded by obedience to that false god. The idolatry of the heathen who bows the knee to the stock or stone of his own carving, is not more senseless than the idolatry of him who bows the knee to his own will, but it is less sinful. The former is, indeed, a sad delusion, but it is

a delusion; whereas will-worship is ever accompanied with a latent consciousness of the worthlessness of its object.

In the first few months of his quarrel with his brother, Mr. Campbell had partially succeeded in bearing up against all these depressing influences; but the cheerless isolation in which he lived could not continue long without producing its effects, and before the frosts of winter had yielded to the touch of spring, he had sunk into a state of hopeless, querulous despondency.

And Mary, too, the unresisting victim he had offered up so ruthlessly at the shrine of his pride! With what pleasure had she always greeted the approach of summer! What a deep joy had she ever experienced when the trees were clothed in their first light garb of green, and the garden became once more her pleasure and her care! How happy had she been the year before in the consciousness of her own love for Herbert, and in the bright prospects that an attachment no less deep had opened for her sister! And now, how changed was every-

thing since then! The trees put forth their leaves and the flowers their blossoms, and Oakwood, with its green sunny swards and rich foliage, never looked more beautiful. But now its beauty only pained her, for it reminded her of the happy, happy hours when she had enjoyed it with others most dear to her, whom she could never hope to see again; and the sadness of the contrast made her feel her desolation the more strongly. Her piano remained unopened for long weeks together. A joyous melody would have been jarring to her feelings; a sad one spoke to them too powerfully, and she required all her composure, and all her strength for that loving service which the state of her father's health rendered necessary. She, poor girl, stood quite as much in need of nursing as himself; but she tried to conceal it from him, and little did he ween how powerful an auxiliary her constitutional tendencies had found in her secret grief. Dr. Freeman was unremitting in his attendance, and two days seldom elapsed without his calling at Oakwood. All his care, however, and all his

medicines seemed of no avail against the hacking cough which was wearing her strength, and he saw at last that the time had come to open her father's eyes to the nature of her disease, and prepare him for the blow which was to rob him of his last remaining comfort.

Mr. Campbell was sitting in the study which had lately been the scene of so much bitter strife, so many inward struggles, but his eye was not as bright as then, nor his head as erect. He was making no vain attempt to read, much less to write, but was sitting in his arm chair, gazing listlessly before him. The suspicion that his god had been no true god, but had played him false, that his will-worship was no true incense in the eyes of Heaven, but rather the worship of one of the least of all God's images, had begun to assume a distincter form, and to play sad havoc with his peace. That will-worship indeed! A pretty pass it had brought him too! He looked for comfort on the days gone by, but they teemed with painful recollections. He thought of the present, and

all was gloom. He turned to the future for relief, and the gloom assumed that deepest, darkest form, the unknown destiny of a lost soul.

A knock was heard at the study door, but the old man did not heed it, and Dr. Freeman entered unbidden. Mr. Campbell stared vacantly at the intruder, and then with a mechanical courtesy made a sign to him to be seated.

"I have taken the liberty of disturbing you, Mr. Campbell, this morning, because I have just seen Miss Campbell, and I wanted to say a few words to you about her."

"What about Mary, Doctor?" said the old man quickly. "You do not think her cough worse, do you?"

"No, not exactly worse, but she does not get rid of it, and there is a character about it which I do not at all like."

"It is certainly very late in leaving her this year. She has had a cough, as you know for several winters, but it has always left her in the summer, and now that the warm weather is coming on—"

Dr. Freeman shook his head.

"Why, God bless me, Dr. Freeman, what do you mean? You don't mean to say—"

"We are all in God's hand, Mr. Campbell, and I should be very sorry to excite your alarm unnecessarily. But I think it only right to tell you, that I fear Miss Campbell may never lose her cough."

Mr. Campbell stared at Dr. Freeman in silence, as if he had not rightly understood his words, and expected some further explanation. He had been so accustomed to Mary's cough and its yearly recurrence, that it had ceased to attract so much of his notice, and the idea of losing her had never occurred to him.

"You think then there is danger?" he said at length.

"I fear that the lungs are already partially affected, and where that is the case, there is always some danger," replied Dr. Freeman, considerably understating his opinion.

The old man looked earnestly at the doctor for a moment, and then turning away his head,

pressed his hands to his face, and burst into tears.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "And must I lose Mary too? But tell me, Doctor, if there is not anything to be done? I don't care what it is. I will take her to Nice, Lisbon, Madeira, any where you like. Only tell me there is yet hope."

"I do not say there is no hope, Mr Campbell, but I have thought it right to prepare you for the worst. With regard to change of climate, I should say it might be very advisable for her to go to Madeira in the autumn, but that at present she had better remain where she is."

"Oh dear! oh dear! what shall I do? Can we not do something at once? Would you like to have a consultation with any London man? If so, only tell me, and I will write at once. I will send an express."

"I do not think we should gain anything by that, as I believe I fully understand her case. But of course if it would make you feel more

easy, I shall be happy to meet anybody you propose."

"No, Doctor, no, I have perfect confidence in your opinion. But, pray tell me, what *can* I do? What *can* I do?"

"I think," replied Dr. Freeman, looking rather fixedly at Mr. Campbell, "I think that the most important thing is to relieve her of all anxiety, as far at least as lies in your power. I am afraid that she frets herself a good deal about something or other, and that until *that* is off her mind, my art can avail but little."

Mr. Campbell was silent; but the doctor saw in his countenance the inward struggle that his words had produced.

"Leave me, Doctor," he said at length in a faltering tone. "I will see what can be done, but leave me now. I must think it over. Oh, God!" he muttered to himself, "If I should have been her ——"

Dr. Freeman did not catch the last word, but he guessed it, and immediately left the room.

Another scene that had taken place in that very room was present to Mr. Campbell's mind, and other words than any that had just been uttered now rang in his ears. "Another victim! God forgive you," had been Mary's sole ejaculation as she left the room on that sad occasion. "God forgive me, indeed!" he said to himself. "I sorely need it."

His soliloquy was interrupted almost immediately by the appearance of its subject. Mary entered the room with an open letter in her hand.

"Papa," she said, as she approached him timidly, "I have just received a letter."

"Well, love?" he replied, encouragingly, and with more kindness in his manner than she had observed for several months.

"It is from Bertha, papa. She is at the vicarage, and has written to beg that I will go and see her. Uncle Edward is ill, too, and obliged to keep his bed, and wants to see me very much. I did not wish to make you angry, and therefore thought I would ask your per-

mission first. Oh, papa, do pray let me go! If you refuse me," she added, as the tears stole down her cheeks, "I shall never see Bertha again, for she sails for New Zealand the day after to-morrow. She has come here expressly to take leave of me before we part for ever."

"Poor Bertha!" said Mr. Campbell in a low voice.

"Oh, if she had but heard those words!" said Mary. "They would have made her very happy. Then I may go, may I not?"

"Yes, Mary," replied her father, "Go at once, love. But wrap up well, and take care of yourself, or you will make your cough worse."

Mary thanked her father, and left the room.

"So, Bertha is at Stonecombe again," said the old man, musingly. "Bertha here again, and going to the other end of the world, because I have refused her the merest necessities of life!"

He looked around the luxurious apartment, but neither the richly carved oak book cases with

their handsomely bound contents, nor the heavy curtains that hung around the mullioned windows, seemed to afford him much comfort.

Mary hastened to the Vicarage. The meeting between the sisters was a very affecting one. Right glad they were to see each other once more, and the prospect of a speedy parting made each moment painfully precious. Neither could compliment the other upon her good looks, but Bertha was the most shocked when she marked in her sister's face, the fearful ravages disease had made since she had last seen her.

Bertha told her sister that she had received a letter from Egerton the day before, to say that he had completely succeeded in the object of his visit to Rome, as he had rescued his sister-in-law from her painful position, by establishing the fact of her marriage to the satisfaction of the most sceptical. She had at one time felt a little anxious lest he should return too late for the Falcon; but as it had only left the docks that day, and Egerton would reach London the same

evening, they would have plenty of time to join her at Plymouth.

She wished to be in London to meet him, but had found it impossible to leave England without making an attempt to see Mary and her uncle once more, and had therefore accepted Herbert's escort for a parting visit to the neighbourhood of her old home.

"So Herbert is here," said Mary, colouring slightly.

"Yes, Mary, he is," said the individual referred to, as he entered the room, "and not a little happy to see you at the Vicarage once more. But, dear me, how—"

Herbert paused. He knew that Mary's cough had been worse, but he was not prepared for so great a change as that which he now perceived in her appearance. The truth struck him at once with all its dread reality. The bright eye, the hollow cheek, the hectic flush—all claimed in unmistakeable language the victim of consumption.

"Don't look so horror struck!" said Mary, smiling. "It is nothing of consequence, Herbert. My cough has tried me rather more of late, and made me look paler and thinner than I did, but now summer is at hand, I hope to get rid of it. But if you look at me in that way, I shall begin to think I must be a regular fright."

Herbert endeavoured to smile, but he felt that the edict had gone forth, and that another parting was at hand,—a parting even yet more painful than the first.

"How is my uncle?" he said, wishing to give the conversation a different turn. "Do you think he is at all softened towards us? Has my father's illness produced no effect?"

"Papa has not been well for a long time," replied Mary, "and I think he begins to look on things with somewhat different eyes than he did a few months since. But my uncle's illness has not produced that effect, for he never heard of it till I told him this morning."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Herbert. "My father, his only brother, ill, and within a quarter

of an hour's walk of him, and he know nothing of it! Who would have thought that possible a year ago?"

"Who indeed?" said Bertha.

"Please, Master Herbert," said Brady, entering the room, "master wants to speak to you."

"I must go to my father now, dear Mary; but mind, you don't return to Oakwood before we have seen each other again."

Mary promised, and Herbert repaired to his father's bedside.

"Take that chair, Herbert," said the Vicar. 'There is a good deal I want to talk to you about, and as Bertha leaves England so soon, it is but right that Mary should see as much of her sister as she can. Poor girls! They will never meet again in this world; and that they know full well."

Mr. Campbell paused for a minute or two, and then proceeded as follows:

"I do not believe, Herbert, that there is anything at all serious in my present attack, but

still at my age life must always be somewhat precarious, and I have therefore determined to acquaint you at once with certain facts of which you have at present no suspicion, but which I think you ought to know."

"Do you wish me to make any memorandum of them, father? Shall I get a sheet of paper?"

"No, no, Herbert, thank you. That is not necessary. Before I enter upon the subject itself, I should like to ask you one question. Are you satisfied with your prospects in life?"

"How can I be, sir, when I see poor Mary—"

"I do not mean in that way, Herbert; I mean merely as far as this world's goods are concerned."

"Certainly, sir; quite satisfied."

"Then, in short," said the Vicar, "you do not attach much value to wealth."

"I did not mean that," said Herbert.
"Wealth will never be mine, and therefore I do

not think about it, but am content with what God has given me. But yet I should attach much importance to it, if I had it, for there are fifty things here in Stonecombe that I should like to set about directly if I only had the means. In the first place there are Mardon's Almshouses, which are—"

"I understand you," said his father, interrupting him. "You mean that if wealth were honorably yours, you would soon find an honorable employment for it, but for your own wants you do not covet more than the competence which you already possess."

"Exactly so," replied Herbert, wondering where this introduction was to lead.

"You remember, Herbert, that shortly after your uncle quarrelled with me, Walker called on me, and that he has often been here since."

"Certainly, sir, and I felt rather curious to know what confidence could exist between two persons so diametrically opposed to each other in character and everything else."

"It appears that through some papers which

must have come into his possession as your uncle's solicitor, he discovered certain facts unknown even to his client. These he afterwards communicated to me, in the hopes that I should avail myself of them."

"And what were they, Sir?"

"You know that my mother and your grandmother, Mrs. Macdonald, was originally a person of rather humble station. Her father was a respectable Scotch farmer."

"I have often heard you speak of my grandfather having made her acquaintance in rather a romantic manner in the Highlands."

"Rather too romantic, Herbert. Your uncle was born before her marriage, but I was born subsequently to it. It is painful to have to allude to such things, which are far better forgotten. My mother was of a warm affectionate disposition, and one can hardly wonder that my father, then a handsome young man, with all the advantages of wealth and education, should have obtained a somewhat too easy conquest over the simple Scotch farmer's daughter."

"But what was Walker's object in raking up this old story? Perhaps, after all, it is nothing but a malicious calumny of his own invention."

"No, Herbert. It is but too true. He made a journey to Scotland with the express purpose of ascertaining the facts, and brought back with him attested copies of the register of your uncle's baptism, and your grandmother's marriage. He shewed them to me, and I must acquit him of calumny in the present instance."

"But what was his object, Sir?"

"By the law of England, Herbert, your uncle cannot inherit landed property in this country as the eldest son. He could inherit land in Scotland, but not here. Legally, therefore, the Oakwood estate, and all the other English property descended to me. Walker proved all this beyond the shadow of a doubt, and wanted me to commence proceedings to eject your uncle, expecting, of course, to get well paid for his information. Under any circumstances I should have refused to do so, es-

pecially as my poor mother's frailty must have been paraded before the public eye in a court of law. But just after your uncle had broken off all intercourse with me so cruelly, I felt it more than ever impossible. He threatened that at any rate he would make the affair public, and all my entreaties that he would keep quiet seemed to have no effect. Except my sad difference with John, nothing has ever tried me so severely as the constant dread that that bad man's malice and greed of gain should induce him to execute his threat. Heaven forgive me if it be a sin, but the news that he had committed forgery, and been obliged to run away, was the greatest possible relief to my mind. I slept better after it than I had done ever since he told me that fatal secret."

The Vicar paused.

"Well, Herbert," he said at length, "you do not speak. Do you not think I have taken the only right view of the case?"

"You have taken a very generous one, my dear father, at any rate. But this extraordi-

nary news has come upon me so unexpectedly, that I require a little time for thought."

"You see, Herbert, my feeling has been that if I alone were concerned, I might have carried the secret with me to the grave, and should have been quite justified in doing so. But I did not feel that I had an equal right to determine a question, in which your interests were so nearly concerned, without giving you any option in the matter. I cannot help hoping, however, that you will view it in the same light as myself."

"You must give me a little time, my dear father. Good Heavens!" he continued passionately, "to think that at the very moment that your own brother was refusing to have any intercourse with you, you, on the other hand, were sacrificing a large fortune to save his feelings! What a contrast!"

"I cannot defend John's conduct, but we must not judge him too severely, Herbert; he had much to try him, perhaps more than we are aware of. And then I felt his pride would be so

sorely wounded if he had the least idea of our poor mother's frailty, and that in a certain manner he was illegitimate. Do you not think that consideration for his feelings ought to outweigh even all your other benevolent schemes? Surely we ought to allow him to enjoy the short remnant of his days in peace."

Herbert was silent for a few minutes. At length he said :

"I have been endeavouring to take the highest view I can, and I believe I see my way clearly in this question. You quite mistake me if you imagine for one moment that I covet Oakwood and all its acres, or that any charitable schemes of mine would induce me to wrest his possessions from him. But I differ from you in this one point. I think we should consult not his present feelings, but his real welfare. You said that we ought to allow him to enjoy the remnant of his days. Do you think, then, that he does enjoy them?"

"I fear not, Herbert; I fear not."

"And why not, father?"

"His pride, Herbert, and perhaps a conscience ill at ease, are sufficient to—"


"That is it," replied Herbert hastily, interrupting his father; "that is the point. It would be mere affectation in us, in a private conversation, moreover, to attempt to conceal our opinion of my uncle's conduct in many things. You condemn it in your heart, father, as much as I do. I know you do; you can't deny it. You condemn his conduct to Egerton, to Bertha, to Mary, and myself, as heartless and cruel. You know that his treatment of yourself is without excuse, and—"

"Stop, Herbert, stop, I beg. You ——"

"No, father, I *must* speak out. I am only saying what I *know* to be true—what you yourself, what, unfortunately, all the inhabitants of Stonecombe know to be true. Now this unjustifiable conduct proceeds from his unbounded pride, which has made him blind to the duties he owes to others. Am I not right?"

The Vicar answered with a groan.

"Is it not true?" said Herbert.



"I would to Heaven I could deny it!"

"Do you think then that this pride is such a very precious feeling that we should help him to cherish it? Do you think that he will be the happier either in this world or the next, if he is allowed to live and die in such a godless delusion as the self-worship which has embittered both your and his declining years—has made him do such foul wrong to a noble-hearted man like Egerton, and destroyed the happiness of two such daughters, as Bertha and Mary?"

"But remember, Herbert, the overwhelming sense of mortification which he cannot but feel if he ever learns that Oakwood never was legally his! I fear his pride will not be cast aside so easily."

"The result, my dear father, we must leave to Providence; but it is just because the blow *will* be overwhelming, that I hope the best. I do not wish to take a single acre from him.

We can leave him in the enjoyment of all the *wealth* he now possesses; but I do in my heart
"er all our other attempts have

failed, we should not be justified in throwing away this last chance of touching his better feelings."

"Well, Herbert, I must confess you have placed the subject in quite a new light, and I am very much inclined to think there is reason in what you say. Still I feel a most unconquerable dislike to the idea of telling him what I know will wound his feelings so deeply."

"Suppose you let me lay the whole question before Bertha and Mary? They are in the house at this moment, and we can let their opinion decide between us."

Mr. Campbell gave a reluctant consent. Herbert left his father, and went to seek his cousins, who were enjoying the fine warm, sunny weather in an arbour in the garden. He repeated to them the extraordinary communication he had just received from his father, touched, as lightly as possible, upon their grandmother's frailty, and avoided all painful contrasts between the conduct of their own father and his. Bertha and Mary, however, could not help

feeling that contrast strongly, and fully appreciated Herbert's motive in keeping it in the background. After the first shock to their delicacy, which the frailty of one of her sex will inevitably produce in the mind of every virtuous woman, their strongest emotion, perhaps, was one of sorrow, that the only way in which their uncle could be reinstated in his rightful inheritance involved such a dreadful blow to their father's pride. It was accompanied, however, by one of hope—that that blow might be attended with most beneficial consequences.

“And what does uncle propose to do?” said Mary.

“He wishes to do nothing,” replied Herbert. “He would prefer leaving my uncle in perfect ignorance of the whole affair, and it was with some difficulty that I obtained his consent to speak to you about it.”

“Just like my uncle,” said Bertha. “I do not believe there is a more generous, noble-hearted man alive.”

“You mean, I suppose, with one exception,”

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said Mary, smiling. "But of the best course, Herbert

"Nay," replied Herbert first, and then perhaps I

"My father must know firmly. "It would be to keep it from him. As it necessary to see him to be parted with that a long can restore it to him, it plete change of feeling, fortune may prove the

"That is exactly no bert, eagerly. "I have father see it in the have nearly succeeded thing, Mary. It will be My father and myself have and do not mean that acre. But where are a hurry? The cou up."

THE CAMP

Mary, smiling. "There is no time to be lost. Do not
 the best course, Herbert. I have hopes, great hopes,
 Nay," replied Herbert, "not mention lest they should lead to
 and then perhaps I am content. But I think you can guess
 My father must be continued, glancing at Bertha as she
 ly. "It would be perceived Mary's meaning. It made
 p it from him. As that high, and she offered no objection
 ssary to see him to a departure.
 ed with that a long the restraint of Mary's presence
 restore it to him, it, Herbert was no longer able to
 change of feeling, motion.

ne may prove the "ha! Bertha!" he exclaimed, "what
 That is exactly my ere! She, too, so gentle, so loving,
 eagerly. "I have beautiful!"

see it in the same ars flowed freely.

nearly succeeded. "Never forgive myself," continued
 Mary. It will involing into tears. "Never! never!"
 ther and myself have bert," said Bertha, "surely you
 o not mean that he should reproach yourself with?"

But where are you too much. Would to Heaven I
 ry? The council last few months! I have been

ee my weak, where weakness was

cruelty. I see it all, now that it is too late. My punishment is no light one. Would that I had to bear it alone!"

"But, my dear Herbert, how are you to blame?"

"Do you not see, Bertha, that I was her affianced husband? With the full consent of her father a solemn compact had been made between us, that she was to become my wife. Surely that compact gave me *some* rights, rights that I need not have surrendered so easily. Had I had a spark of manly courage about me, I should have gone to my uncle and *insisted* on seeing her. I might then have spared her some of the grief which has made such sad havoc with her peace, and with her health. Instead of this, under a mistaken sense of duty, I merely tried to bear my *own* trials. I knew I was sacrificing *myself*, but, egotist as I was, I forgot that I had no right to sacrifice *her*. After she had given me her young loving heart, after her affection for myself had become a part of her very life, I betrayed the trust, like a poor weak coward, I

betrayed the precious trust she had reposed in me, and left her to pine through the long weary winter months almost alone,—at any rate, with none near her to sympathise in her sorrows. Had I been near her, I should have watched over her, I should have marked each slight change, and unfavourable symptom, and perhaps I might have saved her.”

“Really, dear Herbert, you must not indulge in such bitter thoughts as these. I feel sure, quite sure, that nothing you could have done would have induced my father to sanction the continuance of your engagement.”

“But I ought not to have yielded so easily, Bertha; indeed I ought not; I feel it in my innermost soul. To think that such a glorious creature must die so young! Oh, God! thy ways are indeed inscrutable!”

CHAPTER XIV.

MARY returned to Oakwood as fast as her strength would permit.

"Is my father at home?" she said to Thomas as she hurried past him in the hall.

"Yes, ma'am, I believe so," was the reply.

And in another minute she found herself in her father's presence.

He knew that she had just seen Bertha, and her flushed cheek and evident excitement made him forebode some new misfortune. He remembered Dr. Freeman's counsel, and determined to exercise all his powers of self-restraint.

"Oh, father," said Mary, "I have a tale, a sad tale to tell you—a tale of sin and shame that will pain you deeply, that must pain us all, but you must hear the whole, whatever it may cost you."

The old man saw his daughter's eyes fixed on his face, and lighted up with an unnatural brightness, and he trembled beneath her gaze. He felt her words were true; whatever it might cost him, he could not choose but hear whatever she might say.

"A poor Scotch peasant girl once made the acquaintance of a young man belonging to a higher class. He had beauty, wealth, education; she had only beauty and a too loving heart. The advantages in such a meeting were all on his side, and we must pity rather than condemn her for its sad end. She fell—and a son was the offspring of their guilty passion. Fortunately for her she had met with one whose heart was not closed to more generous feelings. He loved her tenderly, and made by marriage the only reparation in his power for the foul wrong he had

done her. God blessed their union with two more children, a son and a daughter. They removed to a distant part of the country, where their early history was unknown, and no one, not even their eldest son himself, had the faintest suspicion of the stain that rested on his birth. At length the parents died, and the eldest son succeeded to the inheritance which he believed was lawfully his, but which of right was his brother's. For many years the brothers lived as brothers should, but at length a fierce dissension broke out between them. The younger brother sued for peace, but the elder brother ever turned a deaf and unforgiving ear to all his entreaties, although he knew in his inmost heart that the wrong was on his own side. But the secret of his birth was not destined to remain one for ever. An enemy of the elder brother became acquainted with it accidentally, and urged the younger to claim his birthright. He supported his argument by laying before him proofs of the dates of his father's marriage, and his brother's baptism, so that there could be no doubt of the

truth of his statement. And what do you think, father, that younger brother did? Do you think he hastened to claim his rights? No, father, far from it. He said to himself, 'My brother is at enmity with me, but I will requite his evil with good. No worldly wealth shall induce me to publish my mother's shame, or make my brother's wrath unquenchable. Let him keep his vast possessions, and die in ignorance of the stain upon his birth. I will not wound the pride from which I have suffered so much.' The younger brother became ill, but the elder never visited him. On his sick bed he told his only son the tale I have just told you, and urged his silence. That son, however, took a different view of his duty from his father, and extorted from him a reluctant permission to tell it to the daughter of his unforgiving brother. The object was not to take his possessions. No, it was something far different from this; it was the hope to soften his unjust resentment, and put an end to the bitter feud that had darkened their lives and made them both miserable. Oh,

my father, it rests with you whether this hope is ever to be realized!"

Mary was silent. Mr. Campbell sat perfectly motionless. The one new fact that she had told him agreed so well with what little he knew about his father's marriage, that he found it difficult to doubt it. As a serpent fascinates its prey and then overpowers all resistance in its fatal coils, so had conviction surely and silently crept over his mind, and numbed his faculties in its irresistible grasp. He felt that it had fixed its fangs upon his heart, and that the best blood of all that had been his life, was ebbing fast. His wealth, his station, his honour—all that had been his pride, were all false—all one vast imposition. One convulsive effort—it was the mere instinct of self-preservation—he would still make to free himself.

"The proofs, Mary?" he said, in a low, husky voice.

"Mr. Walker went to Scotland," she replied, "and brought back attested copies of the register."

Walker! Now he knew the meaning of his threats. He looked up to Mary to address another question to her, but was prevented from doing so by her having a violent fit of coughing, the result of her previous excitement.

"Why, Mary!" he exclaimed, pointing to her handkerchief, as soon as she had ceased, "what is that, dear?"

"Oh, that is nothing," she replied. "It often comes when I cough. But I must go and lie down a little while. Never mind that. It is only a little blood upon my handkerchief."

She left the room.

"Oh, God!" he exclaimed. "Would that her innocent blood were only on her handkerchief! Retribution! Retribution! Walker's threats all true. There must be something about it in those letters. I had intended never to look at them, but I will now."

He rang the bell hastily and ordered the servant to bring the green box from the store-room. He unlocked it with a trembling hand, and turned over one bundle of papers after another, but the letters were not there.

“Why, how is this?” he said to himself. “I am sure they were here when Walker—— Ah! That’s it. That is how the scoundrel found it all out. I recollect he was away from home for several days directly afterwards. Then it is true—true—true. I can doubt no more. I am—but no. My poor dear mother! How I loved her! Would to God my soul were half as pure and sinless as hers!

“This is a noble house; but it is not mine. There is not finer timber for miles round than there is on Oakwood; but it is not mine. This is a comfortable chair, but it is not mine. I have passed many and many a wretched hour in it. Ha! ha! ha! *They* are mine,” he continued, laughing bitterly. “I have found something at last that *is* mine—those hours are mine. No new heir will ever rise up to claim *them*! Ha! ha! ha!”

It was but a sorry joke after all, and Mr. Campbell felt it to be so. It did not seem to meet altogether the exigencies of the case, or to afford him much consolation. He had a problem to work out, but bitterness was evidently not the

method that would help him to its solution. In his former mental struggles he had hardened his heart that he might bend the wills of others to his own. Now he had to bend his own will, and that hardening process could only lead to failure. He set to work to think over the events of the last year. The retrospect was not a very pleasant one, but he had to act, and that quickly. It was no time for flinching, and he braced up his will to the task of considering his relations to all whom he had injured.

The foremost figure in the moving panorama that passed before his mental vision, was that of the Vicar, then lying on the bed of sickness. He had refused to claim a large estate in order to spare the feelings of a brother who had broken off all intercourse with him. The brother's crime in ruining an innocent man to whom he had solemnly promised his daughter's hand, had been the occasion of the quarrel. There are fine effects of light and shade there, Mr. Campbell! Dwell on it a little, sir, for there is much to be learnt from it. But the

contrast has impressed itself on the old man's heart in colours that will never be effaced. Ring the bell! In pity ring the bell, and let the canvass unroll its next picture to his view. Ah! what have we here? The owner of Oakwood in his splendid mansion, surrounded by all the luxury that wealth can procure, on the one side, and on the other, his eldest born, the daughter he had loved so fondly, the daughter who had cherished his declining years so tenderly, leaving her native country for the hardships of a settler's life, because she wanted the merest necessities of existence! Lights and shades again! The contrast dazzles the old man's sight, and brings the tears into his eyes. That artist, Memory, must be a cruel artist, to try him so sadly. Has he no more soothing effects to shew him? Ring the bell once more. On one side of the picture we see a young man watching by a friend's sick bed; on the other the sick man's uncle is refusing to stir a finger to save the watcher's little all! Oh! ring, ring, in mercy ring the bell, for the old man's tears

are streaming fast. On one side we see the proud man's daughter tending him in sickness with an unwearrying love; on the other, that proud man is breaking the ties she wore around her heart so closely, and with them her heart is breaking too, for it would not be unloosed so roughly. Oh, God! Have you nothing better to shew him? The colours sear his eyeballs. Ring the bell, and let the canvass once more unroll its length before his dimming vision. But what is this? The short remnant of the canvass is blank! Are there no more pictures, no more aching contrasts to torture him with their damning truths? No. That short remnant is the yet unpainted future. The pictures are the possession of Memory, who will never give them up. That blank is still his own, and he may still compose its subjects. But be quick, Mr. Campbell. Pray be quick, for there are but a few more yards to paint, and then the grave will snatch the brush from your trembling hand, the lights will go out, and the whole of that sad painting will be unrolled once more before a critic

whose judgment is unerring, and whose sentence is doom.

All the long evening hours, all the hours of the succeeding night, did the rollers revolve backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, and the pictures follow in wearying succession, and the torture of their condemnation strike deeper to the seer's heart. But their unceasing revolutions brought with them a lesson in the art of life-painting which it often takes many, many years to learn. Yes, long before morning had he seen that pride and will-worship were the fatal colours that had made the shades so dark, the contrasts so appalling. Long before morning did the yet unpainted blank present a dim outline for the future, in which those colours were to have no place; and when the first beams of the eastern sun burst through his chamber window, they fell on a humbled, heart-broken man, pouring out his soul to God in prayer that he might have time to crown his tardy repentance with the deeds it demanded.

"I see now," he said, as he rose from his

knees, "I see now; I was wrong when I said those bitter hours were mine. They, alas! are mine no more. They are written in God's great book, and can never be effaced; but the future hours are mine yet, and with His grace, they shall bear another story to His judgment seat."

How anxiously did Mary look at her father's face when she greeted him in the breakfast parlour! A single glance was sufficient to show that the demon of pride had been exorcised; that the haughty fabric he had raised for himself in her father's heart had crumbled to dust under the overwhelming blow of that deep humiliation. But she could also read in his haggard looks the agony he had suffered in the conflict of that terrible night, and she shuddered to think what his fate would have been had he succumbed in the struggle.

"I thank you, dear Mary," he said, "for the sad tale you told me yesterday. It seems strange to say so, but I shall owe to it whatever peace may yet be in store for me."

"Lead me to my brother, Herbert," were his only words.

The whole party descended to the sick room. When they reached the door, Mr. Campbell turned to Herbert and his daughters, and said :

"Leave us alone a little while; but Egerton, Herbert, Egerton?"

In a quarter of an hour Bertha and Mary were admitted to the sick chamber. The brothers were both old men, long past the age when tears flow freely, but they had flowed then, and freely, too, and neither of them seemed ashamed. Herbert had already started for London. It was for no long absence, as he intended to return the next morning accompanied by Bertha's husband.

The Vicar's attack had been almost entirely nervous, and the reconciliation he had so earnestly prayed for effected a speedy cure. Two days afterwards he was even able to walk a little while in the garden. Mr. Campbell spent a great part of that week with his brother, and

had it not been for the one great drawback of Mary's illness, there would not have been a happier party within a hundred miles of Stonecombe than that gathered round the Vicarage tea-table.

"I think, Herbert," said Mr. Campbell, "that you preach your first sermon next Sunday; do you not?"

"Yes, uncle."

"May I suggest a text?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

Mr. Campbell took a scrap of paper, and having written something upon it, handed it to his nephew.

Herbert read:

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

"But, uncle," said Herbert, "will not that attract public attention too much to unhappy

differences, which are now buried in oblivion for ever?"

"I only suggest that text, Herbert," replied his uncle. "But," he continued, in a lower voice, addressed to Herbert alone, "as all Stonecombe has known of my sin, I should also wish them to know of my humiliation and my penitence."

The following Sunday Mr. Campbell's pew was empty as before, but the assembled congregation watched the church door every time it turned on its hinges with an unusual degree of interest. Presently two old men passed down the aisle, arm in arm, and took their places in the pew belonging to the Vicar. They were followed by Egerton, with Bertha on one arm and her sister on the other. Herbert preached his first sermon with an eloquence that touched all hearts, for they felt it came from his own. He made no direct allusion to the recent events, but all could see that personal feeling had been sacrificed, and that a public reconciliation was the object intended in the selection of the text.

CONCLUSION.

NEVER was passage money forfeited more willingly than in the case of a lady and gentleman who had engaged a small cabin in the good ship *Falcon*, bound to New Zealand about this time. All their effects had been put on board at London, but to the extreme surprise of the captain, he received orders to land them at Plymouth.

"There's no accountin' for tastes," he observed to the mate, as the last chest swung over the ship's side. "Why, I would have brought 'em back for half the money! How a man can stop on dry land, when he can have a year's pleasin' in such a craft as this, and visit forrin parts for such a mere trifle additional, is what I can't rightly understand. And such a roomy cabin too for two persons! Why, it is six feet four by five feet ten, if it's an inch. But there's no accountin' for tastes."

"'Tis curious," replied the mate, as he sup-

plied himself with a fresh quid. "But lor! them landsmen never knows their own mind."

As soon as the excitement attendant upon this reconciliation had sufficiently passed away to enable the brothers to direct their attention to matters of business, Mr. Campbell urged his brother to take possession of Oakwood Hall, and the estates attached to it, adding, that the income from his property in Scotland would be quite sufficient for his wants. To this proposition the Vicar would not give a moment's consideration. He observed that the happiness of all concerned would be best consulted by allowing things to remain in their former state, and that any change would necessarily involve the publication to the world of their mother's frailty, a result equally painful to both. For the sake of the title to the estate, however, it was found necessary to make some fresh arrangements, and deeds were accordingly prepared by Mr. Patterson, and duly executed by the necessary parties, securing the estates to Mr. Campbell for life, and after his death to his brother Edward in fee.

At the same time, Mr. Campbell made his will, and settled his small estate in Scotland, as also the half of his personal property, on Egerton and Bertha and their children. The other half he left to Mary, though with little expectation that she could ever enjoy it.

As Mr. Campbell was very anxious to keep Bertha with him a little longer, she and her husband took up their residence for the present at Oakwood Hall. A few months afterwards Dr. Freeman's coachman appeared to be possessed by a fixed idea, which compelled him to drive in that direction. He was always at it. If you had seen the carriage rattling down the High Street you might have offered twenty to one that it would take the second turning to the right after passing the church, and you would always have won your wager. Ominous whisperings respecting the cause of this most extraordinary phenomenon might have been heard among the gossips of Stonecombe, till at last one fine morning the mystery was explained. Evans had actually been obliged to leave his

couch at the unusually early hour of three o'clock to fetch the doctor once more; tall Thomas's dreams of Fanny Porter were interrupted in a similarly unpleasant manner, as his services were required to fetch Mrs. Rumble, his Fanny's aunt, and, would you believe it? Yes, positively it is a fact, Mary congratulated Mr. Campbell at breakfast time on being a grand-papa! What a jolly little fellow it was to be sure! (only very red). Right number of toes and fingers, small mole on the left arm (for the purpose of identification in after life should he be stolen by the gipsies), nose and mouth like Bertha's (in Mrs. Rumble's opinion, not ours), and Egerton's eyes. Bertha was doing as well as could be expected, and all were very happy, Bertha herself not the least so.

But towards the end of Autumn Dr. Freeman's carriage was again seen daily on the road to Oakwood, and this time on a far less joyous errand. Mr. Campbell's health had been very delicate. The excitement of that sad feud, and the blow that had brought it to so sudden a ter-

mination, had not passed away without leaving their marks upon a constitution naturally nervous and exciteable. Mary had also been gradually getting weaker, and though she would still talk brightly of the future, and the happiness that was in store for Herbert and herself, those around her saw only too clearly that such hopes were never to be realized.

It was curious to see the tender anxiety with which each invalid regarded every symptom in the other's illness, while comparatively inattentive to their own. Often and often did it occur to Mary that she had never known the whole of her father's character till now, so completely had his higher qualities been overlaid by his pride.

Still more often did a pang shoot through Mr. Campbell's heart, when he saw his daughter gradually passing away before his eyes, and felt that the blow that had reached her young life, had been struck by his own hand. There was no sacrifice he would not have gladly made to stay its effects, but alas! in this case repentance came too late, reparation was impossible.

One morning, towards the end of November, a more than ordinary gloom hung over the inmates of Oakwood Hall. Every one trod lightly as he passed along its passages, and spoke his grief in whispers. Mary was worse—much worse, and Dr. Freeman had been sent for in the night. The Vicar came at an early hour, and all the family, with one exception, were already assembled around her sick bed. Mr. Campbell alone was absent. He had been suffering lately from restless nights, and considering his very precarious state of health, Dr. Freeman had desired that he might not be awakened before his usual time, and the few hours' sleep, which he rarely obtained before the morning, curtailed. Herbert sat on one side of the bed with Mary's hand clasped in his, and Bertha was on the other. Mary was quite sensible, but so weak as only to be able to speak in a whisper. She made a slight gesture, which Herbert instantly understood. He placed his ear to her mouth.

"My legacy, Herbert," she said with a faint smile; "my schools, my poor."

"They shall never be forgotten, dear Mary, never. I will continue to take care of all who have received your generous support."

"Thank you. Very kind. All are very kind. But don't grieve too much.—Bertha!"

Bertha leant over her dying sister. Mary tried to speak, but at first it was in vain; her strength was ebbing fast. At last she said, but in so low a voice that none but her sister could gather her meaning:

"If, Bertha, God bless you and Henry with—a little girl—"

She paused, but Bertha understood her meaning, and whispered in her ear:

"We will call her Mary, dear."

Mary thanked her with her eyes, for her voice was gone. Her sense of hearing, though, was still acute. She had heard the sound of a feeble step outside in the passage, which had quite escaped the others. She looked towards the door. It opened slowly and gently, and Mr. Campbell approached the bed. Bertha rose from her seat,

and motioned him to take it. He shook his head gravely.

"Don't move," he said, "don't move, Bertha."

With considerable difficulty the father knelt down by the side of his dying daughter.


"Forgive me, Mary, forgive me!" said the old man, looking at her with an expression of anguish in his face that would have touched a far harder heart than hers.

She could not speak, but she answered his appeal with a smile so gentle, so sweet, that it seemed to have in it more of the heaven to which she was hurrying, than of the earth she was leaving so young. She gave him her hand. He pressed it in both his, and bowed his head over it, as if in prayer.

For a few moments the silence of that sad chamber was unbroken.

"God bless you all!" she said at length.

The words were hardly spoken, when a change came over her sweet face. Her loving spirit was with God.



The old man's head was still bowed over the thin fair fingers that were clasped in his. He never marked the change.

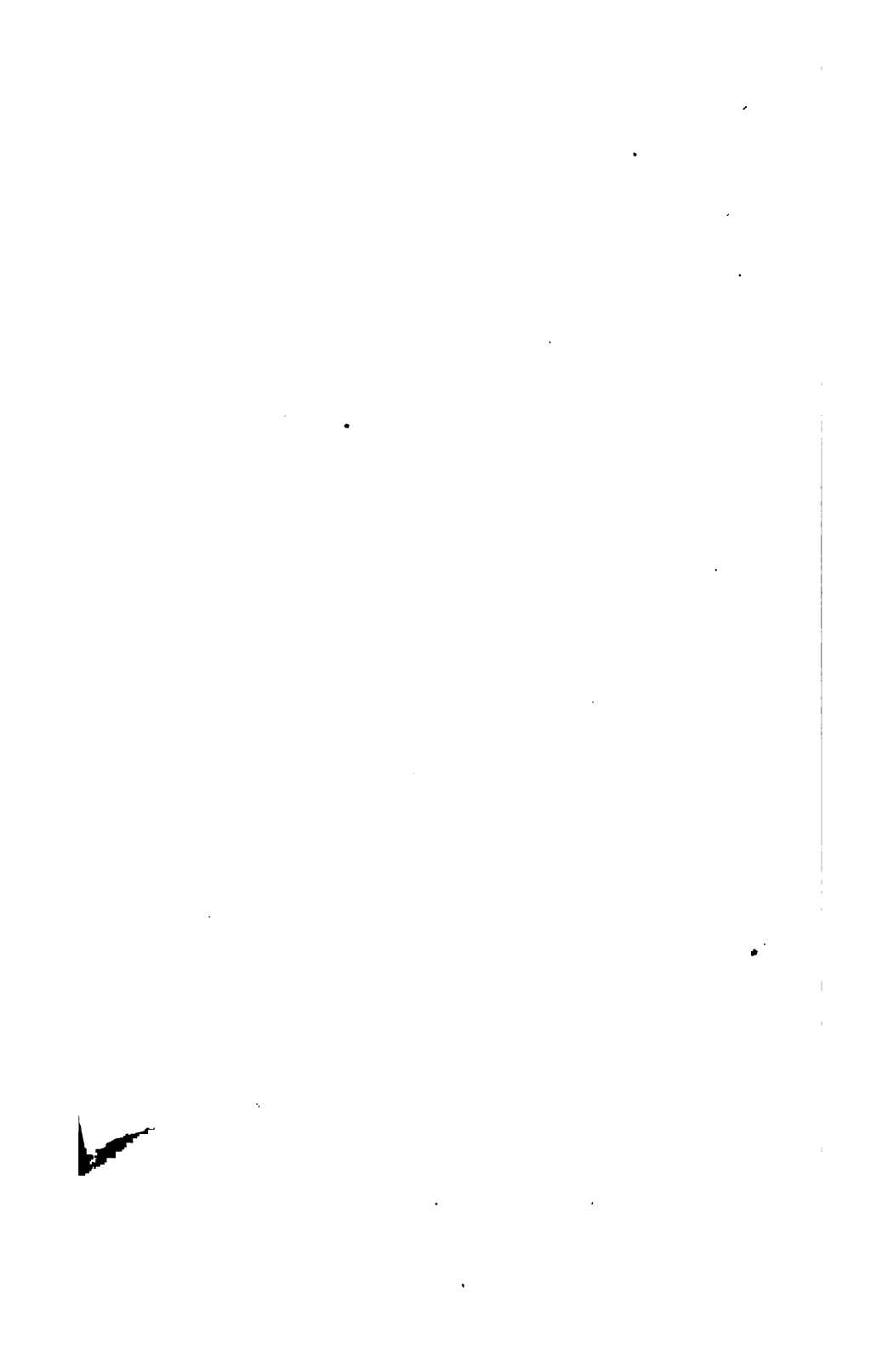
"John," said his brother. "Dear John!"

The old man did not move.

"Father," said Bertha, trying to raise him.

But the old man heeded her not. No one could say whether father or daughter had entered first on the journey to their heavenly home, but all knew that the forgiving and forgiven were recording their reconciliation before the Judgment Seat of God!

FINIS.



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